ATLANTIC PROVINCES SPECIAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada

2004-2005
ANNUAL REPORT

Providing Programs and Services to Students who are
Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deafblind, Blind or Visually Impaired

Formerly the School for the Deaf, Halifax
Established AD. 1856

and

Formerly the Halifax School for the Blind
Established AD. 1871

ATLANTIC PROVINCES SPECIAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT 2004-2005

Halifax, Nova Scotia

August 31, 2006

Chairman and Board of Directors
Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority

In accordance with Regulation 43 of the *Handicapped Persons' Education Act*, I submit herewith the report on the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority for the school year ending July, 31, 2005.

Respectfully submitted,

Bertram R. Tulk
Superintendent

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The Audited Financial Statements to March 31, 2005 are attached.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) is an interprovincial co-operative agency established in 1975 by joint agreement among the Ministers of Education of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

The *Agreement* provided for the creation of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority and authorized it to provide educational services, programs, and opportunities for persons from birth to 21 years of age with low incidence sensory impairments. This includes children and youth who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind, blind, or visually impaired who are residents of Atlantic Canada.

The *Agreement* is the only one of its kind in Canada and, as such, may serve as a model for service delivery at a regional level. Operational costs are shared among the four provinces.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Board of Directors

APSEA is governed by a Board of Directors of twelve persons, three from each province. A deputy minister of Education from each province is a permanent member of the Board. The two additional members from each province are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council for two-year terms. The Board is responsible for overall planning and policy development for the organization.

Standing Committees of the Board

- **Executive Committee**
  The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors is made up of the four deputy ministers of Education in Atlantic Canada and is responsible for the consideration and presentation of recommendations to the Board on major matters having an overall impact on the management and operation of APSEA.

- **Program Advisory Committee**
  The Program Advisory Committee, comprised of the provincial Directors of Student Services and government-appointed members from each province, is responsible for advising the Board on matters relating to programs and services for children and youth who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind, blind or visually impaired.

- **Financial Advisory Committee**
  The Financial Advisory Committee, comprised of the Director of Finance in each Department of Education, is responsible for providing expertise and support, through the Executive Committee, to the Board of Directors in the financial management of APSEA.

- **Trust Fund Committees**
  There are two Trust Fund Committees which determine how monies for scholarships, awards, or special projects will be distributed; one committee for the trust funds for children who are blind or visually impaired and one committee for the trust funds for children who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind. Each committee consists of three members; the Program Director, the Director of Finance and Administration, and an individual from the community. The APSEA Board of Directors is the final authority for the administration of trust funds.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

School districts are recognized as having responsibility for the education of the school- age population. Programs and services offered by APSEA provide support to school districts implementing services for children and youth who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind, blind or visually impaired. The extent to which APSEA programs and services are utilized by individual provinces is dependent on the needs of each province.

APSEA supports a service delivery system which makes it possible for each child to receive an educational program designed to meet the child's individual needs.

APSEA continues to extend its service delivery system to include a variety of educational settings and supports for students who can be successfully integrated or partially integrated into the public school system. Integration, to a large extent, depends on the individual needs of each student, the level of family support, and the availability of support.

Programs for Children and Youth who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind

- An integrated program for students between the ages of 5 and 21 years in a public school with support services provided by an itinerant teacher, tutor, or educational interpreter/assistant. An itinerant teacher provides direct services to individual students. A tutor provides direct service to an individual student under the supervision of an itinerant teacher. An educational interpreter/assistant interprets information presented by teachers through either sign or oral language.

- A preschool program and parent education program.

- A short-term residential school program for children and youth between the ages of 5 and 21 years. These programs are one to two weeks in length and have a clearly defined, focused curriculum intended to provide the student with specific skills in a designated area. The programs focus on issues such as social skill acquisition, language, career education, interpreter issues and organizational skills.

- Educational and audiological assessment and prescriptive programming for all children and youth from birth to 21 years of age who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind.
- Provision and maintenance of amplification equipment.
- Consultative services including workshops for parents, teachers, provincial Departments of Education, health care personnel, service agencies, and interested community groups.
- A teacher education program in conjunction with Mount Saint Vincent University.
- Library services.
- Counselling and transition planning.

Programs for Children and Youth who are Blind or Visually Impaired

- Direct instruction is provided in public schools by itinerant teachers for students who are blind or visually impaired. A tutor provides direct service to an individual student under the supervision of an itinerant teacher.
- Short-term residential school programs are designed to provide a comprehensive level of programming which may be difficult to incorporate in an integrated setting. They have a focussed curriculum intended to provide the student with specific skills in a designated time period. One to three week programs address very specific skills and have clearly defined goals and objectives to be accomplished (e.g., programs addressing such issues as night mobility, orientation and mobility awareness, use of adaptive technology, career exploration, and parent coaching). Three-to five-month programs generally address a much broader array of student needs and involve completion of the local school mathematics and language arts programs during the program (e.g., rehabilitation of a child who is newly blinded, independent living skills, co-operative education programming, and compensatory skill development).
- Preschool and parent education programs.
- Assessment and prescriptive programming for all children and youth from birth to 21 years of age who are blind or visually impaired.
- Consultative services including workshops for parents, teachers, provincial Departments of Education, health care personnel, service agencies, and interested community groups.
- A preschool program.

- Library services.
- Braille transcription.
- Provision of aids, technological equipment services, adapted educational aids and materials.
- Orientation and mobility services.
- A daily living skills program.
- Guidance and transition planning.
- A teacher education program in conjunction with Mount Saint Vincent University.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

ATLANTIC PROVINCES SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Superintendent
Deborah F. Pottie

Director, Finance and Administration
Heather Lawrence, CA

Director, Programs for Students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deafblind
Deborah Rippin (Acting)

Director, Programs for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired
Dr. P. Ann MacCuspie

Director, Assessment and Resource Services
Richard Thompson

APSEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

New Brunswick

John Kershaw
Deputy Minister of Education

Robert Gerard
Director, Student Services

Alex Dingwall
Superintendent, District 18

Nova Scotia

Dennis Cochrane, Chair (Appointed June 23, 2004)
Deputy Minister of Education

Urban Cannon
(Parent Representative)

Heather Macpherson
(Community Representative)

Newfoundland and Labrador

Bruce Hollett
Deputy Minister of Education

Brenda Smith
Director, Student Support Services

Gerald Galway
Assistant Deputy Minister

Prince Edward Island

Shauna Sullivan Curley (Chair until June 2004)
Deputy Minister of Education

Lorna Ansems
Special Education Consultant

Alan Kennedy
Superintendent, Western School Board

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Nova Scotia

Dennis Cochrane, Chair
Deputy Minister of Education

Prince Edward Island

Shauna Sullivan Curley
Deputy Minister of Education

New Brunswick

John Kershaw
Deputy Minister of Education

Newfoundland and Labrador

Bruce Hollett
Deputy Minister of Education

APSEA PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Prince Edward Island

Alan Kennedy (Board Member) Chair
Superintendent, Western School Board

Wanda Whitlock
Director, Student Services

Helen MacPhail
(Parent Representative BVI)

Nova Scotia

Ann Power
Director, Student Services

Urban Cannon
(Parent Representative DHH)

Newfoundland and Labrador

Brenda Smith
Director, Student Support Services

New Brunswick

Robert Gerard
Director, Student Services

APSEA FINANCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Prince Edward Island

Kenneth MacRae, Chair
Director
Finance and Operations

Nova Scotia

Kenneth Moors
Executive Director, Finance Branch

Newfoundland and Labrador

Rick Hayward
Assistant Deputy Minister
Corporate Services

New Brunswick

Ronald Breau
Director of Financial Services

APSEA TRUST FUND COMMITTEE FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF, HARD OF HEARING OR DEAFBLIND

Eve Tupper, Chair

Raymond LeBlanc
Director
Programs for Students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deafblind

Heather Lawrence, CA
Director
Finance and Administration

APSEA TRUST FUND COMMITTEE FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Heather Macpherson, Chair
Member
APSEA Board of Directors

Dr. P. Ann MacCuspie
Director
Programs for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

Heather Lawrence, CA
Director
Finance and Administration

BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

APSEA Board of Directors

The annual meeting of the APSEA Board of Directors was held on May 4, 2005. In addition to the annual meeting, the Board of Directors held the following meeting:

February 1, 2005

Financial Advisory Committee

November 19, 2004
March 31, 2005 (Teleconference)

Trust Fund Committee - APSEA-DHH

October 24, 2004
May 18, 2005

Trust Fund Committee - APSEA-BVI

May 25, 2005

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

FOR STUDENTS

WHO ARE

DEAF, HARD OF HEARING OR

DEAFBLIND

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The report contains information on programs and services provided to children and youth who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind for the year 2004-2005.

The Director of Programs for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Raymond LeBlanc, was on leave for one year and was replaced by Acting Director, Deborah Rippin. This year was busy and challenging in light of the ongoing APSEA Administrative Review. The review began in October and the APSEA Directors met with Lynn Murray and Heather Jones to provide information necessary to complete the document. The initial report was completed in January 2005. In response to this, the APSEA Directors developed a document entitled "APSEA Directors' Response to the Review." As a result of the review, a Directors' Committee was established which included the four Provincial Directors of Student Services and three APSEA Directors. The group worked together to determine the direction and approach necessary to further examine APSEA services. This was presented to the APSEA Board as the "Go Forward" document. It was determined that each province would establish a provincial committee led by the Director of Student Services and include APSEA provincial supervisors, itinerant teachers, school district personnel and a parent. These committees have been established in all provinces, except Newfoundland, and will begin the review process in September 2005. The time line for completion of the review by the provincial committees is June 2006.

APSEA takes great pride in providing a high standard of interpreting services to children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The recruitment of interpreters is an ongoing challenge and 2004-2005 was no exception. The year began with several interpreter vacancies which the EI Consultant, Provincial Supervisors and the Director of Programs worked diligently to fill. With the increased number of children receiving cochlear implants, the need for sign language interpreters will decrease over time.

The Educational Interpreter Consultant worked to ensure that children who are deaf or hard of hearing received quality interpreting services through appropriate interpreter assessments. This was accomplished through classroom observations, professional development plans, Signed Communication Proficiency Interviews (SCPI) and Educational Interpreter Performance Assessments (EIPA).

Due to time constraints, the EI Consultant is no longer responsible for providing interpreter service during student assessments. An interpreter has been trained to deliver this service as it is imperative that the same interpretation is provided for all assessments to ensure the validity of the assessment is not compromised.

Short-term programs continued to meet the needs of children and youth who are deaf or hard of hearing. This is evident through feedback from itinerant teachers and schools. With inclusion and the lack of a critical mass of students who are deaf in any one area, there is an increased need

for short-term programs, which is reflected in the number of student referrals. Frequently there are occasions when a student may be the only individual in the school setting using sign language, which limits interactions and opportunities for language growth. Short-term programs provide for sign language development and connections with deaf peers. This year there was a total of eighteen weeks dedicated to short-term programs.

The addition of a part-time teacher of the deaf to assist with short-term programs was a great support to the Short-Term Program Facilitator. It allowed for increased time to be spent directly with students on language development. This individual will return for the 2005-2006 school year.

The Consultant for Students who are Deafblind or Deaf with Additional Disabilities continued to assist children, schools, and families by providing programming suggestions to enhance development both at home and in the school setting. Programming recommendations are provided through observation, assessment, and consultation with school personnel and parents. The goal is to provide these children with strategies which will facilitate communication, and ultimately allow them to become successful at home and school.

In light of the review, both staff and parents have expressed concerns regarding potential alterations to the APSEA service delivery model. It is hoped the ongoing review will provide recommendations which will enhance a unique service that is envied and admired internationally.

APSEA staff provides exemplary educational supports to children who are deaf or hard of hearing and the 2004-2005 school year was no exception. Staff is continually participating in professional development which adds to an already strong skill set, and their dedication and passion is evident in the supports they provide. Although the 2004-2005 school year was challenging, it provided an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the valuable service APSEA provides.

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah Rippin
Acting Director

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

PRESCHOOL/PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

APSEA provided a preschool/parent education program which was designed to serve the individual needs of preschool children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind and their families.

Through regular home visits and support in preschool or kindergarten, APSEA teachers worked with the family and other professionals to create the optimal learning environment for each child and assisted in building a communicative system for the child and other members of the family.

For the 2004-05 school year, three APSEA teachers were designated parent educators. It was decided that for the upcoming school year, caseloads will be organized so no one teacher will be dedicated only to parent education. This allows for greater flexibility and efficiency of programming and travel.

Students Receiving Preschool/Parent Education Services - 2004-2005	
New Brunswick	44
Nova Scotia	51

PUBLIC SCHOOL SERVICES

APSEA provided support to school district/board personnel and students in inclusive settings under the direction of an itinerant teacher. APSEA provided a wide range of supports including itinerant, consultative, educational interpreter (EI), tutorial, assessment, technological, short-term programs, and transition services.

Itinerant Teachers

In collaboration with school personnel, APSEA itinerant teachers provided service to students enrolled in public, private, and First Nation schools.

Itinerant teachers provided support to 412 students in New Brunswick. Five itinerant teaching positions were located in Fredericton and surrounding areas, five positions in Moncton, one position in Miramichi, four positions in Saint John, one position in Quispamsis, one position in Bathurst, one position in Perth-Andover, one position in Woodstock and one position in Sussex.

Itinerant teachers provided support to 615 students in Nova Scotia. There were four itinerant

teacher positions in the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board, two positions in the Strait Regional School Board, three positions in the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, four positions in the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board, nine in the Halifax Regional School Board and four in the Southwest Regional School Board.

Students Receiving Itinerant Teacher Services - 2004-2005	
New Brunswick	412
Nova Scotia	615

Itinerant Teachers - Direct Service

Itinerant teachers provided direct service to students in inclusive settings to promote development in the following areas: language/communication development; auditory-verbal communication skills; cognitive development; critical thinking skills; academic skill building strategies; social and/or emotional development and Deaf culture/American Sign Language (ASL).

Students Receiving Direct Service - 2004-2005	
New Brunswick	102
Nova Scotia	173

Itinerant Teachers - Consultation Service

Consultation continued to be a critical component of the itinerant teacher service. School personnel were provided with information about program modifications, the acoustic environment of their classrooms and teaching techniques to use with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In collaboration with the school-based team, the itinerant teacher monitored the student's progress and recommended assessments, tutorial support or short-term programs at the APSEA Centre. They also ensured the student's amplification equipment was well maintained and used appropriately, provided encouragement and support to school personnel and attended case conferences when appropriate.

This consultation support ensured that students received the necessary support at the appropriate time, in order to prevent more intensive intervention at a later date.

Students Receiving Consultation Services - 2004-2005	
New Brunswick	266
Nova Scotia	391

Educational Interpreters

In collaboration with the classroom teacher, and under the direction of the APSEA itinerant teacher, the educational interpreter provided oral/sign interpretation between students who are deaf and persons who are hearing. They also provided tutorial support.

Language Acquisition Support Workers (LASW)

There are a small number of students who have started school, but have not developed the language or communication competencies that will allow them to access the provincial curriculum. These children are dependent on a visual mode of communication and require intense intervention to facilitate language acquisition. Therefore, the role of the LASW is to facilitate language acquisition in the student through discussion and questions in the educational environment. The LASW strives to increase the student's vocabulary, syntax and critical thinking as it relates to language by bringing classroom activities and discourse to the student's linguistic level and building on this foundation. They facilitate communication for the student during educational opportunities which happen outside the classroom. They interact with the student to focus his/her attention on relevant information, guide appropriate responses, advise the student of social expectations as they relate to language, including but not limited to turn taking, vocalization and how language is influenced by social distance. The LASW provided educational tutorial support in collaboration with the classroom teacher and the APSEA itinerant teacher.

The skills required for this position include:

- being functionally literate in English with the ability to understand and utilize a variety of communication modes that may be used by the student.
- being able to make a variety of messages understood by the student at his/her level.
- able to organize work and work within a flexible schedule and be able to interact with a wide range of individuals in a personable and mature manner.
- a minimum rating of Advanced on the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI).

This is the third year of this pilot project and we are seeing wonderful results. It is anticipated that once the student has reached a SCPI rating of Survival Plus, they would become candidates for an Educational Interpreter.

Students Receiving APSEA Educational Interpreter (Trained/Untrained)/Language Acquisition Support Worker Services - 2004-2005				
	NB	**NS**	**PEI**	**Total**
Students Receiving Signed Interpretation in Public School (trained)	12	23	1	36
Students Receiving Signed Interpretation in Public School (untrained)	7	1	0	8
Students Receiving Oral Interpretation in Public School	5	4	0	9
Students Receiving LASW Support in Public School	4	2	0	6
Total	**28**	**30**	**1**	**59**

Tutors

Tutors provided direct tutorial service to students under the direction of the APSEA itinerant teacher in collaboration with the classroom teacher. Tutors may be provided to students whose hearing loss necessitates direct service, but where caseload constraints prohibit the intervention of the itinerant teacher. There has been a noticeable decrease in the number of tutors required per province, which is due to the hiring of more teachers who can better address the needs of these students.

This service is being monitored to ensure that tutorial service is only provided to students receiving direct intervention.

In New Brunswick, approximately 898 tutor hours were provided to 9 students.

In Nova Scotia, approximately 150 tutor hours were provided to 2 students.

Students Receiving APSEA Tutor Services - 2004-2005	
New Brunswick	9
Nova Scotia	2

Consultant-Deafblind

A three-year plan for professional development was established to enhance and strengthen the knowledge of the Consultant to work with students who are deafblind or deaf with additional disabilities.

Areas of focus included; Orientation and Mobility, Assessment and Program Planning, Deafblindness, Teaching Strategies for Students with Additional Disabilities, Augmentative Communication, Implications of Vision Pathology, and Practicum/Mentorship opportunities.

The APSEA Consultant:

- provided direct consultation to professionals working with students who are deafblind or deaf with additional disabilities.
- collaborated with the assessment of students who are deafblind or deaf with additional disabilities.
- identified and requested resources for professionals working with students who are deafblind or deaf with additional disabilities.
- participated in the planning and delivery of short-term programs for students who are deafblind or deaf with additional disabilities.

Students Receiving APSEA Deafblind Consultant Services - 2004-2005				
	NB	**NS**	**PEI**	**Total**
Students Receiving Dual Service from APSEA	12	37	0	49
Students who are Deaf with Additional Disabilities	26	29	0	55
Total	**38**	**66**	**0**	**104**

Consultant-Educational Interpreter (EI)

The Educational Interpreter Consultant position was filled on a full-time basis for the entire year.

The EI Consultant provided consultation and support to EI's, APSEA staff, and public school teachers. The Consultant visited programs to provide feedback on the interpreting process, the roles of those involved in the service and the modification of programming as it related to interpreting.

The Consultant was responsible for administering the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) for interpreters and the Sign Language Proficiency Interviews (SCPI) for both staff and students. The Consultant was no longer responsible for interpreting during the administration of assessments for the students at the Centre. The Consultant also assisted in the development of appropriate opportunities for sign skill for staff, students, and parents.

APSEA continued to be faced with a lack of qualified interpreters. Recruitment of trained personnel has stretched across Canada to include people from every Canadian province and representatives of every interpreting training program in Canada.

APSEA has employed the vast majority of the graduating classes from the interpreter training program at the Nova Scotia Community College, Halifax Campus. This year there were a number of interpreter graduates from the NSCC program, but only one was willing to be employed outside the Halifax area.

It is APSEA's goal that all interpreters working with children who are deaf are graduates of an interpreter training program. Presently it is sometimes necessary to employ individuals who have an intermediate level SCPI rating, but are not graduates of an interpreter training program.

Trained Educational Interpreters - 2004-2005	
New Brunswick	12
Nova Scotia	23
Total	**35**

The SCPI has been recognized as an extremely important tool to assess the communication competency of EI's. The skill level of interpreters who have completed interpreter training programs can vary. The SCPI provides information to develop appropriate inservices and provide targets for professional development. Although the SCPI is a useful tool in evaluating the signing abilities of interpreters, it does not evaluate their ability to interpret.

The EI Consultant was successful in finding a tool that would evaluate the signing and interpreting skills of staff. The Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) was developed by Williams and Schick at the Boys Town National Research Hospital, Omaha, Nebraska. The program was piloted at APSEA in November 2001.

The first eight candidates were rated. There was a consistency in the scores which corresponded to the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) Rating Scale results. Due to the ratings showing similar results, it was deemed an acceptable screening tool. The SCPI is an ASL screening tool which must be taken by each interpreter, who must pass with an Intermediate Plus, or higher, rating before an EIPA can be administered. The EIPA is the interpreting screening tool.

The EIPA consists of a videotape that captures interpreters expressively interpreting classroom content and receptively interpreting child or teen sign language.

The EIPA process takes one and one-half hours to administer. One-half hour is scheduled for warm up; the remaining hour is performance testing.

The Rating Report from the EIPA raters is comprehensive in nature. It clearly defines

interpreting and depicts strengths and required interpreter development in the following areas:

- voice to sign
- sign to voice
- vocabulary
- overall factors

In 2004-2005, the EIPA was utilized with six (6) New Brunswick interpreters, fifteen (15) Nova Scotia interpreters and one (1) interpreter from Prince Edward Island. An interpreter must make 3.5 in Voice to Sign and 3.5 in the Overall Factors.

This was the fourteenth year APSEA provided EI service. Since the consolidation of APSEA programs at the Centre in Halifax, the service has seen tremendous growth. In 1994-95 there were 11 interpreters, in 1995-96 there were 26, in 1996-97 there were 32, in 1997-98 there were 43, in 1998-99 there were 51, in 1999-00 there were 53, in 2000-01 there were 55, in 2001-02 there were 57, in 2003-04 there were 66 and in 2004-05 there were 53. Students from primary to grade 12 received this service. As previously stated, there is a decrease in the number of interpreters required due to children receiving cochlear implants.

Sign Language and Oral Educational Interpreters (Trained/Untrained)/Language Acquisition Support Workers 2004-2005	
New Brunswick	24
Nova Scotia	28
Prince Edward Island	1
Total	**53**

Student and Family Counsellor

The demand for support to children and families who have significant social/emotional needs associated with coping with hearing loss or deafness, continued to increase. The counsellors have been able to help children deal with various issues by working with schools, families, and health and community services.

During the past year, the New Brunswick Student and Family Counsellor position remained vacant as this individual was employed as the Acting Director, Programs for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

The Nova Scotia Student and Family Counsellor developed and administered programs which provided peer interaction, social/emotional support and support groups for parents and teens.

The following statistics were provided from the Student and Family Counsellors.

Student and Family Counsellor Services - 2004-2005		
	NB	NS
Students receiving direct counselling services	0	55
Families/guardians receiving counselling services	0	46
Case conferences, consultation visits, behaviour management programs, transition planning team meetings	0	12
Referrals to outside agencies (police, Community Services, etc.)	0	8
Requests for resources from counselling office	0	80
Counselling support via e-mail	0	14
Consultation with teachers, itinerant teachers, guidance counsellors, principals, social workers etc.	0	200
Short-term programs (one week in duration)	0	6
Presentations to school board staff, residential counsellors, parent workshops, conferences	0	3

Transition Planning

Transition planning is designed to help students discover their abilities and potential as they investigate career choices and plan their career path in order to maximize their options. Through transition planning, students make connections to, and discover resources within their communities that are vital to the successful completion of their career plans and transition to adult life. The result of these services is an Individual Transition Plan tailored to meet the individual student's needs and career goals.

Transition Planning Facilitators

One Transition Planning Facilitator position was in New Brunswick and one in Nova Scotia. The Transition Planning Facilitators collaborated with APSEA staff, school district staff and community agencies to provide support to students and families in the development of Individual

Transition Plans. This was achieved through:

- Transition Interviews - conducted with each student individually.
- Regional Transition Meetings - to bring together students, parents, school personnel (guidance, co-op, student services, principals, teachers, etc.), government programs (Human Resources and Development - NB, Advanced Education & Labour, Training & Employment Support Services, Visible Abilities), university and community college personnel, community agencies (as appropriate) and APSEA staff (as involved) to share information and resources in a collaborative way.
- Career Camps - planning and conducting.
- Presentations - to stakeholders and networking with employers, community colleges, universities and government agencies.

Students Receiving APSEA Transition Planning Services - 2004-2005	
New Brunswick	42
Nova Scotia	64
Total	**106**

APSEA continued the process of keeping statistics of the graduates for three years. This information helps us evaluate our transition process as well as provide useful information to government agencies, universities and colleges.

Status of 2004-2005 Grade 12 Students in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia as of June 2005		
	NB	**NS**
Returned to High School to complete programs and/or improve marks	0	5
Transition to employment or work programs	6	3
Accepted at University	0	4
Accepted at Community or Private College	4	5
Entered Community-Based Programs	2	1
No Formal Program	2	0
Individualized Program (Multi-Needs)	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	**14**	**18**

APSEA CENTRE PROGRAMS

Short-Term Programs

Since the closing of the APSEA Resource Centre for the Hearing Impaired in Amherst, NS in 1995, all students who are deaf or hard of hearing have been receiving their educational instruction in their home schools. APSEA provides a number of support services to these students, ranging from yearly consults to weekly direct intervention by a trained teacher of the deaf, providing interpreter services, etc.

Most of the educational needs of these students are being met in their school environment; however, there are students who are unable to meet curriculum outcomes in these inclusive settings. It is necessary for these students to be congregated for short, intensive periods of time and focus on specific outcomes as identified by the school districts/boards. Short-term programs have been established to better meet these outcomes and, as these programs are residential in nature, the outcomes can be addressed beyond the length of a typical school day.

When short-term programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing were first introduced at the APSEA Centre, a half-time teacher was hired to co-ordinate and deliver these programs. As these programs evolved and became established, teachers and school district/board personnel recognized the benefits, therefore, making it necessary to increase the position to full-time. In 2001-02 a teacher was hired full-time to administer, plan and execute the numerous programs.

Requests for short-term programs are increasing each year and APSEA is unable to meet the demands. There were 167 referrals in 2002-03, 197 in 2003-04 year and 191 in 2004-05.

Short-Term Programs 2004-2005				
	Number of Students Placed in Programs			**Total**
Program	**NB**	**NS**	**PEI**	
Supported Work Skills	0	1	0	**1**
Language Communication Groups I and II (4 weeks/group)	1	10	0	**11**
Interpreter Issues/Deaf Culture	9	7	1	**17**
Elementary Social Skills (Groups I and II)	6	9	0	**15**
Junior High Social Skills (Groups I and II)	10	9	2	**21**

Short-Term Programs 2004-2005				
Grade 9 Career Week	5	5	2	**12**
High School Completion	7	5	0	**12**
Total	**40**	**48**	**7**	**95**

There were 191 referrals received for the 2004-05 school year and 95 (49%) of those students were accommodated in programs. Therefore, 96 students (51%) could not be accommodated.

Supported Work Skills

This program is intended for students who have a sensory loss and have limited functional academic skill, requiring small group, or one-to-one instruction. The aim of this program is to help students explore and develop career skills, responsibility, and independence through career exploration and supported on-the-job experience. The program provides basic skills training, both in the classroom setting and on job sites at the APSEA Centre and/or in the community.

Language and Communication Skill Building (Group I and Group II)

The emphasis of this program was to build language and communication skills so students may eventually access the services of an interpreter. The program offered students who are deaf, and use a visual language, an opportunity to interact with their deaf peers and provided an opportunity to introduce them to the Deaf community, by inviting guest presenters who are deaf. The program is delivered by the Short-Term Program Facilitator. The programs are thematic and experience-based. Themes are developed in consultation with the Foundations for Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum and the Atlantic Canada Language Arts Curriculum. Pictures and videotapes were used to carry the program strategies back to the students' home school, itinerant teacher, and into the home. During the 2004-05 school year, two groups of students attended four week-long programs.

Interpreter Issues/Deaf Culture

The focus of this program was twofold: Interpreter Issues and Deaf Culture. The Educational Interpreter Consultant and STP Facilitator worked together to ensure this program reflected the required skills in using an interpreter. A Deaf LASW was part of the team, providing experience in both the areas of interpreter issues and Deaf culture. The program discussed the expectations of both the client and his/her interpreter. Extensive use of role-play situations added to the interactive approach.

Members of the deaf community were invited as guest presenters for Deaf culture, for example; the Director, Deaf Upgrading Program at the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and members of the class, representatives from the Deafness Advocacy Association of Nova Scotia (DAANS), etc.

Social Skills (Elementary / Junior High / High School Groups)

The focus of these short-term programs was to provide social interaction with peers, help students develop positive social skills, and learn self-advocacy skills. The students were actively involved in learning through role-play, games and discussions. All social weeks had an audiological component presented by the APSEA Audiologist.

The Student and Family Counsellors developed these programs which focussed on:

- Meeting, Making and Keeping Friends
- Self-Awareness and Self-Acceptance
- Feelings
- Beliefs and Behaviours
- Education for Sexuality
- Self-Advocacy Related to Hearing Loss

Career Camp (Grade 9)

The Career Camp for Grade 9 students provided an opportunity for students who are deaf or hard of hearing to begin to think about their career options. The program was developed by the Transition Planning Facilitators and the week's activities included a balance of learning about careers, job shadowing, and recreation activities.

High School Completion

This program was developed and delivered by the Short-Term Program Facilitator in conjunction with the Transition Planning Facilitators. A Deaf LASW was also part of the team, to provide the program with an ASL role model. Direct service students, in grades 11 and 12, who plan to go directly into the work force were the target population. The program focus was on work skills, resumes, technological supports, work clothes, and work climate. Representatives from various associations for the deaf were invited to introduce the students to adult deaf and hard-of-hearing resources.

TEACHER TRAINING

A letter of understanding between Mount Saint Vincent University, Acadia University and the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) was signed on August 28, 1997, thus confirming the inception of the new Teacher Training Program to train teachers of the blind, visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing.

The program began officially in September 1997 on a part-time basis, offering a half unit course, Issues in the Education of those who are Blind, Visually Impaired, Deaf or Hard of Hearing, in the fall term. This course was required by teachers pursuing either concentration in deaf education or education of the visually impaired. This is the only "shared" course and offered students an opportunity to gain insights into the special needs of both populations.

During the 2001-2002 school year, the position of APSEA/MSVU Program Administrator was phased out as MSVU staff took over the complete administration of the Master's Program.

The following courses were taught from Fall 2004 to Summer 2005:

Fall - Winter

GEPY 6922 - Comparative Analysis of Language Development I

GEPY 6923 - Comparative Analysis of Language Development II

Summer

GEPY 6905 - Communication for Deaf or Hard of Hearing

GEPY 6823 - The Psychology of Child and Adolescent Development

APSEA-SPONSORED WORKSHOPS

Parent Workshop

The Parent Education Weekend entitled "Navigating the System" was held from April 22 - 24, 2005. A Meet and Greet session was held on the Friday evening. It was hoped that parents would mingle and introduce themselves, but unfortunately it was poorly attended. Saturday morning began with the parents having an opportunity to meet members of the APSEA Executive Committee to discuss the APSEA Administrative Review. The feedback from parents indicated they appreciated the time the Executive Committee and Directors' Committee took to meet with them, listen to their questions and concerns, and explain the review process. Parents indicated they were returning home not feeling the high level of anxiety they had been experiencing before

this meeting. The parents requested to meet again with the Executive Committee as the review process moves forward. Open and honest communication between parents and the Board will help to relieve parents' fears regarding services for their children.

There were a variety of topics covered Saturday morning which included:

- Advocacy Skills for Parents
- Career Development
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) at Home
- Auditory-Verbal Therapy (AVT)

Saturday afternoon was dedicated to The Parent's Role in the Individual Education Plan.

Sunday morning began with the session, "Hard Lessons Learned" presented by Nina Woulff and finished with a student panel presentation.

The feedback was positive and the parents truly enjoyed Nina Woulff and the student panel discussion. The panel was made up of older students who have completed public school and are making the transition to work, or post-secondary education. Parents are always eager to hear the students' stories, the challenges they faced, and the successes they have achieved.

A total of 67 parents attended the parent workshop; 55 were parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing and 12 were parents of children who are blind or visually impaired. Due to limited staff and space, babysitting service was provided for 30 children.

Public School Staff

The annual inservices (held in co-ordination with the Audiology/Speech Language Departments) were cancelled in Fredericton and Saint John due to low enrollment. It was decided that APSEA teachers would provide individual inservices at their respective schools as needed. The inservice in Moncton was held as planned with approximately 25 district teachers in attendance. These presentations continue to be a coordinated effort of APSEA teachers, audiologists, and speech/language pathologists. Feedback is positive and all involved regard this as an informative day of professional development.

Annual Inservice

On November 3-5, 2004 all itinerant teachers in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia gathered in Halifax for the annual inservice. This year the key speaker was Dr. Connie Meyer, Professor, York University in Toronto. Her presentation focussed on "Principles & Practices: Developing Language and Literacy Programmes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Learners." As teachers of students who are deaf and hard of hearing she reinforced the principles of what we do, why we do it, and how language acquisition directly impacts on literacy. Although she spoke for the entire

day, feedback was extremely positive to the extent that many staff members felt it would be beneficial to have her return.

The remaining sessions included the topics;

- Autism - Stephanie Allen Holt
- Assistive Technology for Literacy and Communication (Board Maker, Writing With Symbols and Intellikeys) - Sheila Jamieson and Andrew McCara
- Introduction to the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) - Cindy Millar.

A staff meeting was held on November 5 which provided an opportunity for staff to ask questions and express concerns regarding the APSEA Administrative Review.

Financial Assistance

APSEA staff members received financial support from APSEA to attend the following conferences/workshops.

- First Canadian Mental Health Conference and Deafness
- Women's Conference - Leadership Skills
- ATEC Conference
- Educational Audiology Seminar
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) Workshop
- AVI - Auditory Verbal International Conference
- CAEDHH Biennial Conference

SUMMER PROGRAMS

Educational Interpreter Workshop

The annual Educational Interpreter Workshop was held August 30 - September 1, 2004. This is the only opportunity that interpreters have to get together as a group.

The welcome and opening remarks were made by the Director who took the opportunity to introduce new staff members. The Director of Finance reviewed aspects of both the NB and NS union contracts and Ann Slaunwhite, Payroll Clerk, explained the payroll procedure. The guest speaker on August 30 was Bonnie-Lyn Barker, previous APSEA EI Consultant, and present Interpreter/Interpreter Coordinator for the New Mexico School for the Deaf in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The presentation was entitled, "Methods of Interpreting from K to 12."

The second day of the workshop was organized for specific groups; Oral Interpreters had sessions with Barb Randall (social/behavioural issues related to children who are deaf), Catherine

MacMullin (bringing the message down to the language level of the student); Sign Language Interpreters/Communication Facilitators had a session with Chrissy Montgomery (ways to complete and deliver an entire concept) and Chris Racine (breaking down the message to ensure a clear interpretation).

There were 53 participants; 30 sign language interpreters, 8 oral interpreters, 9 language acquisition support workers and 6 communication facilitators.

Sign Language Immersion

The fifth annual Sign Language Immersion Program was offered at the APSEA Centre June 27-30, 2005. Thirty-two people participated in this activity. The program involved all levels of sign from beginner to advanced.

The Program was co-ordinated by a Deaf adult and utilized six instructors, which allowed participants to receive instruction at their level of competence. There were different topics and instructors each day. Topics included: Fingerspelling and Numbers, Verb Directionality and ASL Storytelling, etc. The fee for this program was $150 for APSEA staff and $200 for non-APSEA staff and included lunch daily. Accommodations were available at the APSEA Centre at no cost for staff and at a fee of $100 for non-APSEA staff.

STAFF

Administration

Acting Director	**Deborah Rippin**
Administrative Secretary	Pam Edmonds
Consultant, EI Services	Sandra Kidston
Consultant, Students who are Deafblind	Andrew McCara
Short-Term Program Facilitator	Christy Everett
Transition Planning Facilitators	Al Gillis (NB)
	Ans van den Broek (NS)

New Brunswick

Provincial Supervisor	**Joan Skinner**
Student and Family Counsellor	Vacant

There were 20 teaching positions in New Brunswick during the 2004-05 school year.

There were 28 educational interpreters, language acquisition support workers, and facilitator positions in New Brunswick during the 2004-05 school year.

Nova Scotia

Provincial Supervisor	**Barry Imber**
Student and Family Counsellor	Barbara Randall

There were 26 teaching positions in Nova Scotia during the 2004-05 school year.

There were 30 educational interpreters, language acquisition support workers, and facilitator positions in Nova Scotia during the 2004-05 school year.

Retirements

At the annual retirement banquet held on November 4, 2004, APSEA honoured three retirees who worked with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Celia Burns - Celia began her career in deaf education in 1969 at the Interprovincial School for the Deaf in Amherst. After leaving Amherst, Celia taught both in Halifax and the Annapolis Valley. She job shared for a number of years with two other teachers. Celia also worked as an itinerant teacher and a day class teacher.

Theresa Hoeg - Theresa began working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing in January 1976. She began her career at the School for the Deaf in Amherst as a residence counsellor. She worked with the younger children in the Bee Gee Dorm as well as the deafblind children in the Fearon Unit. Theresa relocated to Halifax in 1995 and continued to work with a variety of children until 2004.

Charlotte Ingram - Charlotte has a 35 year history with APSEA. She began her teaching career in 1969 at the Interprovincial School for the Deaf in Amherst. After working at the school for a number of years, Charlotte moved to Sydney. She continued to work with students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the capacity of a day program teacher as well as an itinerant teacher.

COMMITTEES

Directors' Committee

The Directors' Committee was established in February 2005 and consisted of the four Provincial Directors of Student Services and the three APSEA Directors. This group was responsible for creating a document to outline the areas within the current delivery model and, after careful

research, to present possible alternative options.

The Committee met on three occasions in Halifax and had two teleconference meetings. These meetings provided opportunities for all parties to discuss, explain, and question the APSEA service model and to determine the needs of the provinces relating to children who are deaf or hard of hearing, deafblind, blind or visually impaired.

Each Provincial Director of Student Services will organize a committee within their respective province to examine services provided to children served by APSEA to determine if there is duplication of service or to propose alternate ways to meet student needs. This committee will be headed up by the Director of Student Services and include APSEA and school/district personnel. It is expected that all committees will be formed by September 2005 as the deadline for completion is June 30, 2006.

The Directors' Committee was a forum which allowed for open communication and the exchange of ideas, which was informative for all parties. Working on this Committee also reinforced the challenges related to trying to coordinate meetings between seven individuals who have busy schedules.

Crisis Management Committee

The Committee met on two occasions this year. On both occasions there was discussion regarding a lock down procedure at APSEA which could be necessary if there was a hostage taking incident or an incident of violence. The Employee Assistance Plan was also discussed and it will be reinstated in September 2005. Another area of discussion was reporting student disclosure of abuse while at the APSEA Centre and the procedure was reviewed to ensure that it continues to be relevant.

Interprovincial School Development Association (ISDA)

The Interprovincial School Development Association (ISDA) administers the trust fund of APSEA - Programs for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The Committee met twice during the 2004-05 school year (October 25, 2004 and May 18, 2005) to review applications for financial support for recreational, social and cultural activities for youth who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Funds are also used for scholarships, graduation awards, prizes and support for research toward the development of techniques that would improve the learning of youth who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The members of the ISDA Committee included the Director of Programs, Director of Finance and Administration, and the Chairperson.

Parent Workshop Committee

This year the Parent Workshop Committee consisted of parents and staff from both populations and concentrated on trying to meet the needs of parents of children with visual and/or hearing losses. They brought their expertise and ideas to the planning sessions.

The Committee's initial meeting was held at the APSEA Centre in Halifax, with remaining meetings held via teleconference. The Parent Education Weekend entitled "Navigating the System" was held from April 22 - 24, 2005.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Interprovincial School Development Association (ISDA)

The ISDA Committee awarded $27,800 in scholarships in amounts of either $700 or $1,000 to 29 students.

The Committee also awarded $8,000 to four students for the George Bateman Merit Award. These awards were $2,000 in value.

Incentive Award for Professionals

Two professionals were each awarded $1,000 to pursue post-secondary education that will allow them to work with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Special Projects

The Committee awarded approximately $12,000 in the category of special projects. This funding supported activities for children such as registration at camps, recreation programs, etc. Funding also supported attendance at national conferences for three parents.

Professional Development

The Committee awarded approximately $8,000 to 12 staff members to attend professional development activities. These activities included: Sign Language Immersion Program at APSEA, CAEDHH Biennial Conference, Auditory-Verbal International Conference, and PECS Training Workshop. The Committee also awarded $3,200 for 8 adults (2 are APSEA staff) who are deaf to attend the American Sign Language Instructor Training Program (ASL-IT) at NSCC.

Scholarship Committee

The Scholarship Committee is made up of the Director and designated members. This year the designated members included the NS Student and Family Counsellor and an Itinerant Teacher.

This Committee meets annually to review applications and award the scholarships and prizes available to students through the APSEA Trust Fund and professional organizations including the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union (NSTU) and the Maritime Association of Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MAEDHH).

The Committee met on June 8, 2005 and chose students for scholarships, awards and prizes. Each award was accompanied by a certificate which was sent to APSEA teachers for presentation at the student's graduation/school closing.

The following is a list of the awards and scholarships presented:

- Arlene Burris Memorial Scholarship ($700)
- Co-operative Education Award ($50)
- Fred T. Atkinson Award ($200)
- Garnet J. Colwell Award ($200 - divided between two students)
- Laverne Leslie Award (Book - awarded to three students)
- Lena Donachie Award (Book - awarded to four students)
- Marven Spence Memorial Prize ($300 - divided among three students)
- Mary M. Cameron Award ($700)
- Michael Marsden Memorial Prize ($25)
- Nova Scotia Teachers Union Scholarship ($200)
- Peter J. Owsley Jr. Reading Award (Book - awarded to three students)
- Post-Secondary Education Award ($500 - divided among three students)
- Rosemary Chiasson Memorial Prize ($50)
- Ruth Ripley Memorial Prize ($25 - given to eight students)
- William L. Fillmore Memorial Prize ($200 - divided between two students)

CONCLUSION

APSEA staff members are to be commended for the excellent support they provide to children who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind or visually impaired. Staff is continually asked to become knowledgeable in numerous areas, ie. new technology (cochlear implants, digital and programmable hearing aids), service delivery plans, assessment, etc. and their dedication to the field is exemplary of the quality service they provide. Through all the varied experiences they confront daily, it is evident the people working for APSEA are strong advocates for the children they serve. It is gratifying to know the value of APSEA service is recognized by school and school district personnel across the provinces.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

FOR STUDENTS

WHO ARE

BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.
Nothing can be done without hope and confidence. - Helen Keller

APSEA staff faced enormous challenges over this past year. Without question, the focus of the year for staff was the content of the document entitled "APSEA Administrative Structure: A Review." Following an announcement by the Newfoundland Department of Education that it would be unable to meet approximately 40% of its financial obligation, the 2003-2004 school year ended with the loss of both a residence counsellor and a teacher position at the Centre. Along with a number of other reductions in various budget areas, it was further decided by the APSEA Board to conduct a review of the administrative structure of APSEA with a focus on governance and finance. Heather Jones and Lynn Murray, two retired New Brunswick educators, were selected by APSEA Board Chairperson, Dennis Cochrane, to complete the review by November, 2004. At the February APSEA Board meeting, Board members received the review and a document written by the APSEA Directors responding to the review. As well, a "Go Forward Plan" written by the provincial Directors of Student Services and based upon the review was presented to the Board. It was agreed that the provincial Directors of Student Services and the APSEA Directors would adopt the guiding principles outlined in the "Go Forward Plan" and develop a proposal for this revised review process. This group was named the Directors' Committee.

The creation of the Directors' Committee was a positive event in the review process. Shortly thereafter, the Executive of the APSEA Board and the Directors of Student Services from the three Maritime Provinces met with parents of students served by APSEA. This meeting coincided with the APSEA Parent Education Weekend held in late April. Parents were assured that both APSEA staff and parents would be involved in the revised review process. At the May meeting of the Board, the newly designed proposal for a review of APSEA services, governance and finances created by the Directors' Committee was presented and approved by the Board. The process was designed to be completed over a one year period with each province establishing committees to investigate an array of programs, services, and questions relevant to the education of students with sensory disabilities. These committees, led by the provincial Director of Student Services, will report back to the Directors' Committee who will make recommendations for any changes identified through the review process. June 2006 will certainly bring some changes for APSEA, and I am optimistic that these will be of direct benefit to both students and staff. Undoubtedly, the report will applaud the dedication, expertise, and effective programs and services provided by APSEA staff.

In reflecting upon this year at APSEA, there appears to be some life lessons for the organization. First and foremost, it is critical that an organization requiring the support of various provinces focus specific and routine efforts on keeping the participants well informed. A Board and its various committee members must have a sense of ownership and pride in the mission and actual work of the organization. Secondly, staff and stakeholders must be well informed and valued

participants in routine reviews of the work completed by APSEA. Thirdly, even if APSEA staff are providing appropriate programs and service which are valued by stakeholders, leadership and initiative to respond to the changing needs of students, their families and teachers, and widely recognized expertise in the field of sensory disabilities, all this is still vulnerable to the whims of governments of the day. Finally, APSEA's strength is in its staff who have a dedicated commitment to providing the best possible programs and services to children with sensory disabilities. This passion and the focused purpose it creates must be valued as a requisite component of any model of service delivery recommended by the Directors' Committee.

After thirty-three years (thirty-two of these with APSEA) working in the area of education of students who are blind or visually impaired, now seems the best time for me to leave. As I move to other interests in my field (e.g, teacher education, research, consultation), I will cherish the wonderful children, their families and the dedicated staff with whom I've had the privilege to work.

Respectfully submitted,
P. Ann MacCuspie, PhD
Director

PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Services are provided to preschool children in their home communities by itinerant teachers for students who are blind or visually impaired. Programs for these children are developed in consultation with APSEA provincial preschool consultants. APSEA staff provide consultation and training to parents, preschool and daycare staff, as well as any other professionals or organizations working with these children.

Vicki Jeans, Provincial Supervisor in Nova Scotia, was able to recruit a preschool itinerant teacher for the HRM area to replace Patti Bowie who retired unexpectedly in January after many years with APSEA. One often does not realize the efforts and responsibilities accomplished by dedicated staff until they are gone. The objective in locating a replacement for the remainder of the school year was to keep the current level of service in place and to ensure families and preschool children continued to make progress. This was accomplished through the mentorship of Patsy Newman, Preschool Consultant, and the newly assigned teacher, Marcy Burrows.

Patsy Newman, the Preschool Consultant for Nova Scotia, applied for and received a grant from the NSTU to purchase materials for the kits of materials she has designed for use with children who have cortical visual impairment (CVI). Patsy has amassed a vast amount of knowledge in this area and has lists of resources, videos, and handouts for teachers and parents. She presented a session on assessment and programming for children with CVI at the APSEA Annual Inservice in November and again in the Sydney area in December. Public school teachers and teacher assistants were very appreciative of the information she provided.

In February, a braille course was organized for parents of students who currently use braille or will be learning braille in the future. This preliminary braille course was organized by Patsy Newman, Marcy Burrows and Nova Herring to address parents' concerns about braille. It was held one evening a week for three weeks and attracted approximately twelve parents. The course included an introduction to both braille letters and numbers. The first lesson covered the braille alphabet and some punctuation marks; the second week, numbers and one-cell whole word contractions and additional punctuation; and the third week the contractions for "*and, for, of, the, and*" were introduced. Parents were most appreciative of this opportunity, and several went on to register with the Hadley School for the Blind correspondence course to continue their education in Braille literacy.

A concern about the provision of more regular service to preschool children, particularly in the Halifax-Dartmouth area where the population continues to increase dramatically, was expressed in the 2003-2004 Annual Report. Working with preschool children creates high demands on the itinerant teacher's time. Currently, there has been a significant increase in the number of preschool referrals for babies who are blind, hence requiring significant amounts of direct service. Once again this year, the addition of a .5 teaching position in the HRM area was required and added to alleviate some of the issues associated with this situation.

Students Receiving Preschool Services - 2004-2005	
Nova Scotia	40
Prince Edward Island	5
New Brunswick - Anglophone	19
New Brunswick - Francophone	9
Newfoundland	11
Total	84

PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAMS

APSEA provides support services to school district personnel, parents and students enrolled in public school programs in their local communities. Children and youth who are blind or visually impaired are required to complete all the standard curriculum and programs (Core Curriculum) as determined by the Department of Education of the province in which they reside. The itinerant teacher is a member of the school-based team and may provide consultation to classroom teachers, parents and other team members to ensure that the necessary adaptations or strategies are in place for students to participate fully in all aspects of the Core Curriculum. Children and youth who are blind or visually impaired also require instruction in all areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum. This includes communication modes (e.g. braille reading and writing, reading and writing with low vision, augmentative communication), orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, career planning, adaptive technology, visual efficiency, and recreation and leisure skills. It is the role of the itinerant teacher to provide direct instruction in these areas and to ensure that these essential skills are being addressed by other members of the team. Currently, each of the provinces recognizes and credits courses in Braille, Assistive Technology, and Orientation and Mobility as part of the options required for high school completion. The itinerant teacher also coordinates access to other APSEA services as required (e.g., short-term programs at the APSEA Centre, assessment, transition services, adaptative equipment, and alternate format materials).

Each province has a Provincial Supervisor who oversees APSEA services in the designated province, an Orientation and Mobility Consultant who provides consultation and monitors services relevant to the provision of orientation and mobility instruction and programming for students, a Preschool Consultant who coordinates and supervises programs for preschool children, and a Transition Facilitator who coordinates the transition of students leaving school to post-secondary education, work, or supported living arrangements.

Every year, there are special public school projects where APSEA staff are required to play a significant role to ensure meaningful access for students who are blind or visually impaired. In

New Brunswick, APSEA was needed to provide support to a student who uses both large print and braille and who became involved in a computer laptop pilot project at Nashwaaksis Middle School. Consultations with the school team were initiated; and project co-ordinators and APSEA technology support staff considered possible access solutions which included a combination of large print, voice output and braille device access. This student and his Itinerant Teacher attended a short-term program at the ASPEA Centre to learn how to use the Braille Notetaker (a type of Braille computer); and as a result, they were able to get some direct consultation and trial of initial potential solutions. The ASPEA Asssistive Technology Consultant visited the school and made recommendations for necessary changes and accommodations to the initial set up. At the end of the year, the student, ASPEA staff, and the local school educators reported the project had been an absolute success for both the student who was visually impaired and his sighted peers. The integration of technology in every aspect of the public school curriculum is now a routine expectation.

A project initiated by APSEA in conjunction with SET-BC (Special Education Technology in British Columbia) was the use of the Bookport, a digital e-text reader. In collaboration with SET-BC, this pilot was designed to assess use of this device by high school students in various Canadian provinces. A training session was held at the APSEA Centre in December; and to accommodate New Brunswick students, a second onsite training session was held in Fredericton in February. APSEA itinerant teachers who had students enrolled in the project and school district methods and resource staff also attended. Eight students in high school and middle school participated in the Fredericton, day-long session to familiarize themselves as well as their teachers with this technology. The Bookport enables students to download and read electronic text books and novels provided in this format by APSEA and the CNIB National Library digital collection. The Bookport is much like an MP3 player but is specialized in that it will handle digital files for e-text, braille files, large print and digitalized speech. Students learned how to download books and other materials from the APSEA Centre website, CNIB library and other locations over the internet. They learned how to store them on their laptops as well as use the Bookport as a portable reading device. When the project was evaluated, it was noted that the most avid users of the Bookport were Grade 8 to 10 students as high school students appeared to already have technology providing a level of access to such material.

Several times a year, APSEA Centre-based staff travel to specific provinces and public schools to assist or provide consultation with a given program or student. An APSEA Centre-based teacher, who is blind himself, spent a week travelling with the Prince Edward Island itinerant staff. Accompanied by his guide dog, Quebec, and with his particular expertise in technology for braille and speech users, Ron Alley impressed parents, students and teachers with his level of independence and expertise. He was perceived to be an excellent role model for the students with whom he worked. While in Prince Edward Island, he visited five students assisting with various pieces of assistive technology. He also made a home visit to the family of a totally blind child where he was warmly received and appreciated.

Another notable program that included New Brunswick students and school teams involved a team consultation for an adolescent girl who is blind with multiple needs and self-abusive

behaviors. The consultations took place both at the APSEA Centre and at her high school in New Brunswick. Sheila Jamieson and staff from the APSEA Centre were able to identify and implement a number of communication and behavior protocols, assistive technology suggestions, and work with the school team and parents both at the student's community high school and the Centre. These interventions for positive communication and the reduction in the student's self-injurious behaviors supported this young woman's transition plan to the supported work situation in her home community and to her day-to-day living arrangements. Another school team training opportunity was offered to a school team from Sussex High who teach several students who are visually impaired at that school. At the request of District 6, a methods and resource teacher and teacher assistant from Sussex High were able to visit the APSEA Centre, consult on the use of augmentative communication programs with both the APSEA Centre teacher and the itinerant teacher and have training and practice in the use of the Intellikeys and Intellitools software and writing with symbols programs recommended for use with this student and as well as others at Sussex High. Collaboration between staff at the APSEA Centre and public school educators is now a well established practice throughout the Maritime Provinces.

School Age Students Receiving Itinerant Services - 2004-2005	
Nova Scotia	271
Prince Edward Island	34
New Brunswick - Anglophone	123
New Brunswick - Francophone	80
Newfoundland	147
Total	655

Transition Services

Transition planning is a collaborative service designed to assist students and their families in planning for the transition from school to adult life. Participating as a member of the student's transition team with school district staff, community agencies and parents, the APSEA Transition Facilitator assists the student with long-range planning for the future and developing strategies to reach their goals. Students are also monitored for a period of five years beyond graduation to observe their progress and to determine the effectiveness of the transition process. APSEA has two Transition Facilitators, one providing service to students in Nova Scotia (based at the APSEA Centre) and the other to students in both New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island (based at the itinerant teacher office in Moncton).

For the student who has the single disability of vision loss, the Transition Facilitator will work closely with him/her to prepare them for post secondary education and/or for job readiness. Recent research has shown that the population of those who are visually impaired continues to be

chronically unemployed or underemployed. The guidance and instruction that the Transition Facilitator provides has become even more crucial in the current competitive job market. For the student who is visually impaired with other disabilities, the role of the Transition Facilitator is to work with families and community agencies to develop supported living situations, day programs or activities beyond high school. Transition Facilitators have found developing these plans increasingly more challenging as suitable programming and housing becomes more limited.

Transition Facilitators also work closely with APSEA Centre staff to plan and deliver short-term programs focussing on career development. Career Weeks I and II expose students to the world of work. They participate in job shadows, career exploration activities, and work site visits. Post-Secondary Week is designed to prepare students going on to post-secondary education. Activities include a tour of a university campus, mock lectures, demonstrations and evaluations of technology needs, and financial and budgeting information. These highly successful weeks take a tremendous amount of work and organization, but they are crucial if students are going to be ready for life beyond high school. Both Transition Facilitators are also active participants in relevant transition committees and organizations in their respective provinces.

APSEA Transition Facilitators have been invited by Jamie Fillion of the Nova Scotia Community College to serve on the new Disability Services Advisory Committee. NSCC has reported an increase of 500% in the number of students with disabilities entering their programs since 1999 and also report an 85% retention rate. This speaks favourably to the initiatives being taken to promote the inclusion of those with disabilities beyond the public school system. The Provincial Supervisors are piloting two career planning/screening tools for students -- one for those who are in academic programs and one for students with multiple disabilities and visual impairment. Use of such instruments helps to identify the most appropriate direction for students while there is still sufficient time in their school career to focus on the prerequisite skills for various pursuits. Betty Strugnell, Acting Transition Facilitator for Nova Scotia, attended her first meeting with the Nova Scotia Department of Education Transition Committee and was asked to chair one of the sub-committees. Her extensive experience with the APSEA transition program will serve her well in this role.

Students Receiving APSEA Transition Services 2004-2005	
Province	**Number of Students**
Nova Scotia	**90 (5 left the school)**
Prince Edward Island	**14**
New Brunswick	**44**
TOTAL	**148**

Orientation and Mobility

The Orientation and Mobility Consultants assigned to the Maritime provinces continue to support the direct instruction of orientation and mobility by the itinerant teachers as well as provide some direct instruction to children with complex needs or those being trained to use electronic mobility devices. For students taking Orientation and Mobility as a high school credit, the first snow of December provided an opportunity for practice in winter travel. Snow often presents special challenges for those who are blind as it both obstructs the usual travel paths and diminishes the quality and loudness of environment sounds which are often important cues for the traveller. In addition to assessing students, program planning, direct instruction and providing consultation to itinerant teachers, Orientation and Mobility staff continue to provide staff training for those completing the APSEA Orientation and Mobility Training Program. Although the majority of staff have already completed this additional training, there are a number of new staff who are just at the beginning stages, making staff training a truly cyclic endeavour.

A number of Orientation and Mobility Training sessions were provided in New Brunswick this year. On April 13th, six Teacher Assistants participated in an Orientation and Mobility session at Sussex High School. They were taught basic sighted guide techniques and had an opportunity to practice their new skills under blindfold. This program was repeated on April 25th with six Teacher Assistants from Simons High School in Saint John. On April 22nd, four APSEA Itinerant Teachers met in Fredericton for an Orientation and Mobility day. They practiced their cane skills under blindfold in a downtown urban setting while earning hours toward their APSEA O&M Mobility Training Program.

Recruiting Future Teachers

Special emphasis continues in each province to recruit future teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired. With the 2004 cohort of graduate students in the Masters program for teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired now half way through their program, seven of the nine are currently working as Itinerant Teachers. The scarcity of qualified teachers in this area is so severe that these graduate students, although only halfway through their program, are the only ones available when vacancies occur. In Nova Scotia, Provincial Supervisor Vicki Jeans was faced with replacements for three Itinerant Teachers by late December. In Port Hawkesbury, the .5 part-time teacher resigned early in January. In the Sydney area, an Itinerant Teacher fell and broke his leg. The Preschool Itinerant Teacher in the HRM retired unexpectedly in January. We were fortunate to have teachers currently enrolled in the Masters program at Mount Saint Vincent University available. Because we were unable to recruit a teacher for the .5 position in the Port Hawkesbury area, Itinerant Teacher caseloads in the surrounding areas had to be reshuffled to address the needs of the students across affected school districts.

Great emphasis on recruiting a much larger cohort for 2006 is critical as the rate of retirements in the field is expected to double within the next few years. The fact that the program at Mount

Saint Vincent can be completed through summer study and distance education seems quite attractive to potential teachers. They can continue to work in classroom settings while pursuing their degree. The Director and the Provincial Supervisors have been particularly successful in creating interest in the program through presentations to BEd students in Maritime universities. As well, APSEA staff presented at two job fairs in February. Jennifer Shields, Provincial Supervisor for Prince Edward Island, shared a booth with HEAR staff at the Maritime Education Job Fair sponsored by the University of Prince Edward Island. Jennifer also spoke to over sixty pre-service teachers as part of their "Introduction to Inclusion" class at the University of Prince Edward Island. Deborah Rippin and Ann MacCuspie had a booth at the job fair held in conjunction with the various Nova Scotia university faculties of education. This event was sponsored by Mount Saint Vincent University and had over three hundred participants.

Special Student Accomplishments

A number of students served by APSEA now or in the past achieved special recognition in September. A grade six student from New Brunswick won first prize in a Braille essay contest sponsored by the CNIB. This is a remarkable accomplishment for her as she has recently lost her vision and has been working diligently to learn Braille and the use of assistive technology. Chelsey Gottell of Antigonish won both a gold and a bronze medal in swimming at the Paralympic Games in Athens, Greece. Contessa Scott, a former student served by APSEA, was a member of the Canadian women's goal-ball team who defended their gold medal status earned during the 2000 games. Congratulations are extended to these three accomplished individuals. A former student receiving APSEA services in New Brunswick was featured on CBC's television program *Moving On*. The Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability (ALACD) Youth Exchange Program and its participants were highlighted. Hosted at Carleton University in Ottawa, the ALACD's annual Youth Exchange celebrates the diversity of disability and Canadian culture. Giving delegates the opportunity to try a variety of active living opportunities, experience a sense of community as Canadians with disabilities, and develop leadership skills they can use in their home communities, the Exchange has been touted as a life-changing experience. Viewers had the opportunity to share in the experience of an ALACD Youth Exchange through the eyes of two delegates from the event in 2004 - Tonya Thibodeau, Duncan, BC, and Stephanie Berry, Riverview, NB, as they participated in exciting activities such as tubing on the Rideau River and rock climbing along with forty-eight other young people with disabilities from across the country. ALACD is a national, non-profit organization formed in 1989. It has twenty national partners and works in every province and territory to promote healthy and active living for Canadians with disabilities. Another student referred to the program by APSEA has been chosen to participate in a Youth Exchange in Japan this summer.

Space Camp

This past September, seven Nova Scotia students and two APSEA teachers/chaperones travelled to the United States Space and Rocket Centre in Huntsville, Alabama to attend a one-week Space Camp. This NASA affiliated camp runs all year for students and adults interested in space. A

specific week of camp is set aside for students who are blind or visually impaired. This was the fifteenth year the camp has been hosting a week for students who are blind or visually impaired. This year, there were 170 students attending from eight different countries. The Canadian team consisted of thirty-eight students. Two of the APSEA students were in Grade 6 and attended Space Camp activities the program provides for this age level. The remaining APSEA students participated in Space Academy activities designed for older students. Student and chaperone accommodations were in "Habitat 1," a building meant to resemble accommodations people might live in on the moon. The days were packed with activities; and after leaving the Habitat at 8:00 a.m., the students often did not return until 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. Each team was assigned a Space Camp Councillor. These counsellors were often university students with an interest and knowledge in the field of space, and they lead the team through the organized camp activities. The teams toured the Space and Rocketry Park and Museum onsite and learned space facts that they later had to remember to play a space trivia game. They also built and fired model rockets and had the opportunity to try a variety of simulators designed to create the experience of walking on the moon, moving in space, and taking off in a spaceship.

A big part of the experience was preparing for and completing team missions. These missions took place on the "training floor" which consisted of a mock space shuttle and space station built to scale. As well, in "mission control," students learned to monitor and assist the activities on the space station or shuttle. Each student was given a role and had scripts to follow. These roles included completing experiments on the space station, completing timed procedures in the shuttle or monitoring the activities from mission control and assisting to overcome problems by offering corrective steps over a speaker and monitor system. Students with vision who were in "mission control" were often able to see the students on the space station or shuttle by watching a monitor.

Over the past fifteen years, efforts have been made to make this week of Space Camp accessible to students with visual impairments. The Space Camp Counsellors received training regarding working with students with visual impairments, campers were given an orientation to the campus upon arrival, teams moved together, large print and braille copies of missions were provided, two braille transcribers were onsite, and the chaperones were available to assist with necessary vision related accommodations. Although improvements have been made since the last APSEA trip in 1999, there were some areas of concern brought to the attention of the Space Camp personnel at the chaperone's meeting at the end of the week. For example, Space Camp distributes a booklet with fill-in-the-blanks to campers. This booklet is meant to assist campers with listening and remembering facts they learn during museum trips and simulator activities. These facts are helpful for the trivia game or for camper interest. These books were provided to the students in regular print and have now been requested to be provided in the students appropriate medium so they will have access to this note taking as well.

Overall, Space Camp provides an excellent hands-on experience for students to learn more about space and the space program, to meet other students who are blind or visually impaired from other parts of the world, and to challenge themselves to do new activities. All seven APSEA students who attended Space Camp 2004 reported that they enjoyed the experience, met new friends, and would like to attend again in the future.

APSEA CENTRE PROGRAMS

Short-term Programs

Short-term programs are a vital component of meeting the needs of students who are blind or visually impaired in Atlantic Canada. Since school terms vary from province to province, the length of short-term programs is flexible enough to accommodate the variations. The short-term programs are designed to provide a comprehensive level of programming which may be difficult to incorporate into the regular classroom. The array of programs is designed to respond to identified individual student needs and can vary in length from one-to-two weeks to as long as three-to-five months, depending on the needs of the child and the request of the school team. All areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum can be addressed, such as braille reading and writing, the development of reading efficiency, orientation and mobility, organization and study skills, career education, technology training, independent living skills, leisure and recreation, and visual efficiency. Some of the more popular programs include programming for children with multiple disabilities, teacher/teacher assistant consultation and training, and parent consultation. The student, accompanied by school-based staff, attends up to one week of intensive training and consultation to address the unique needs of the student. Staff are exposed to a multi-disciplinary team that has a high level of expertise working with children who are visually impaired. APSEA staff and the school team work collaboratively to ensure that the programs suggested will meet the needs of the student. Again this year, APSEA classroom teachers made several trips to visit students and their teachers in their local school environments as a follow-up to their short-term programs at the APSEA Centre. This proved very successful in ensuring that programming suggestions were implemented, and any concerns that arose were addressed in the local school setting. Short-term program staff at the APSEA Centre must be flexible and creative to meet the array of instructional demands as well as provide support and motivation to the students enrolled each week or for longer placements.

Mary Jean Bray, APSEA Program Supervisor, received much positive feedback about the braille literacy progress made by a Dartmouth elementary student who attended the ASPEA Centre for the month of February. The student made significant gains in both braille reading and writing. Because this student is enrolled full-time in a French immersion program, the disability-specific skills she requires to accommodate her disability are sometimes not given the emphasis they require to promote mastery and independence. Finding time to teach the Expanded Core Curriculum for students who are blind or visually impaired is an ongoing challenge for Itinerant Teachers and school team members.

This year a pilot short-term program was presented to eight students who are intending to go directly from school to the work place. In the past, the Career Exploration short-term programs have usually been focused on students planning to pursue post-secondary education. Since the needs of this group vary from those moving directly to the workplace, a more cohesive group of students were brought together to focus on their specific career development and independent living skill needs. Outcomes for the program were achieved, and students had favourable responses to the program presented.

Another interesting three-month program was presented from April through June for a group of four teenage boys who use braille. This program generated many instructional demands as their individual learning needs were the focus for each boy's placement (e.g., assistance with Nemeth code, independent living skills, assistive technology). As well, the Supported Work Skills Program, comprised of both students who are hard of hearing and visually impaired, is one which is now well established. Students establish daily routines and work toward more independence in basic employment and daily living skills to assist them to live more independently during their adult years.

Students Completing Short-Term Programs at the APSEA Centre in 2004-2005

Students Completing Short-Term Programs at the APSEA Centre in 2004-2005					
Province	**One Week Programs**	**Two-Three Week Programs**	**One-Two Month Programs**	**Three-Five Month Programs**	**Total Attendance**
Nova Scotia	66	5	15	7	93
New Brunswick	50	2	2	2	56
Prince Edward Island	12	-	--	1	13
Newfoundland	3	-	--	--	3
TOTAL	131	7	17	10	165

Unique Requests

In addition to the array of short-term programs offered at the APSEA Centre each year, staff are routinely asked to accommodate very specialized requests to address a specific student's needs. An example of such a request would be that of the student who is deafblind and her parents from Prince Edward Island who came to the APSEA Centre investigating the most appropriate technology to provide both visual and auditory input in the regular classroom. This student uses some large print material, braille, and wears hearing aids. The voice programs for the assistive technology for students who are blind had to be fitted with adaptations to accommodate input through the hearing aids. The expertise and problem-solving abilities of the Technology Department staff were challenged but an excellent solution was created and tested, ensuring the student had much improved access to information in the classroom.

Visitors to the APSEA Centre

Parents, public school educators, university students, and medical personnel make many visits to the APSEA Centre each year to learn more about the work with students with sensory disabilities. For example, in February, four students from the first year Masters of Clinical Vision Science program visited the APSEA Centre with their instructor from the IWK Hospital for Children. Ann MacCuspie presented a requested lecture on the social cost of blindness and visual impairment. These students also requested an opportunity to observe the instruction of students. Two fourth-year medical students were each given a full day observation schedule at the APSEA Centre. In March, a medical student from the IWK, a Resource Teacher from HRSB, a Teacher Assistant, and a Resource Teacher came in for a week with their student, four public school staff members came to observe one of the supported work skills students, and a preschool student and her parents came for one day. As well, several of the MSVU practicum students finishing the requirements for their Masters in Education of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired spent a week working in the short-term programs where they had the opportunity to work with a wide range of students. While placements such as those just mentioned require some scheduling and planning, it is hoped that they will pay benefits to children and their families in the future as these professionals will have a greater awareness of the needs of students who are blind or visually impaired.

Parent Weekend

The APSEA Parent weekend held in Halifax April 22nd - 24th was a great success and attended by approximately eighty parents with an additional fifty attending the Saturday morning session. Parents had an opportunity to discuss the review of APSEA with the Deputy Ministers and Directors of Student Services from the Maritime provinces. They were very keen to meet with APSEA Board and Executive committee members and Student Services Directors to hear directly what is being planned for a review of APSEA services. This opportunity provided a forum to ask questions and have their comments heard. Dennis Cochrane, Chair of the APSEA Board, assured them that they will be involved, informed and included in future meetings and that the APSEA review will be fair and transparent. Later in the day, other sessions on various topics were presented (e.g., The Role of Parents in Career Development, The Role of Parents in the SEP/IPP/IEP Process). The parents of students who are blind or visually impaired voted to join the parents' group for parents of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. This motion was well received by both groups especially the parents of students with both visual and hearing disabilities.

The Sunday morning session on advocacy for parents by Dr. Nina Wolffe was very well received as she struck a real chord with participants with her personal perspective as a parent of a child with special needs. The student panel of six senior students who are either working or attending college and who also happen to be deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired was also very popular and had to be called to a halt to allow people to travel back to their respective communities around the Maritimes.

2005 Canadian Vision Teachers Conference

A highlight of the year at the APSEA Centre was hosting the Canadian Vision Teachers Conference. APSEA staff are to be commended on the superb co-ordination, planning and running of this event. With over 250 participants from across Canada and many parts of the United States, the event was truly an international one. The theme of the program was delivering the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) which is the disability-specific curriculum for students who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities. Dr. Phil Hatlen, Superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind, gave the keynote address focusing on the need for all professionals and parents to work collaboratively to provide instruction which addresses the unique learning needs of students in a timely and effective manner. Having designed the approach to program delivery at the Texas School for the Blind on the ASPEA service delivery model, Dr. Hatlen spoke graciously about the pioneering work APSEA has done in effectively responding to the assessed needs of students who are blind or visually impaired.

The pre-conference, full-day workshop was presented by Dr. Christine Roman, a leading educator in assessment and programming for students with cortical visual impairment (CVI), now the leading cause of blindness in children in North America. This workshop was attended by educators of students who are blind or visually impaired but also by teachers in preschools throughout Nova Scotia and representatives from a number of departments at the IWK Hospital. While most APSEA staff are currently using Dr. Roman's assessment process and designing programming recommendations based on her work, educators from other parts of Canada gained much new information from the sessions. Patsy Newman, APSEA Preschool Consultant for Nova Scotia, has been implementing Dr. Roman's approach for nearly two years and provided video tapes for comment during the final part of Dr. Roman's presentation. Dr. Roman was truly impressed with the success of the children with whom Patsy has worked.

Friday and Saturday of the conference were filled with a wealth of interesting and informative sessions on such topics as implementing the Canadian National Standards for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired, the Unified English Braille Code, assessment instruments for use with the ECC, E-Learning and distance education, early literacy instruction using contracted or uncontracted braille, integrating assistive technology in the regular curriculum, literacy instruction for everyone, CHARGE syndrome, career awareness and technology, voice recognition and screen readers, paraprofessional support issues, self-determination for students, the result of the CNIB Youth Lifestyles research, the shortage of teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired, motor and postural development in preschool children, creating comprehensive student portfolios using digital technology, low vision services in rural areas, autism spectrum, social interaction skills, organizing the itinerant teacher's job, the power of audio tactile materials with the Talking Tactile Tablet, physical activities for youth who are blind or visually impaired, social understanding and joint attention in preschool children, and orientation and mobility. Twenty-four APSEA staff presented either on a panel, poster session or delivered an individual session. Given that there were nearly sixty presentations, this speaks highly of the level of expertise within APSEA and their willingness to share this with their colleagues across North America. In addition to the poster sessions, presentations and panel, an

impressive array of exhibitors and displays were available to demonstrate the latest technology and array of curriculum and instructional materials for use with children from preschool through high school graduation.

While the program for the conference received rave reviews, the social events organized for the conference were truly the talk of the participants. The opening reception on Thursday evening featured wonderful refreshments catered by the APSEA Centre kitchen staff. The Maritime-style lobster dinner held on Friday evening was truly the highlight. Approximately 100 people were served freshly boiled lobster in the true Maritime style. The APSEA staff band added additional flavour with its maritime tunes, and soon everyone was joining in with the entertainment. *"A good time was had by all!"* Finally, the closing banquet at the Holiday Inn featured the presentation of inaugural awards for educators in our field. Debbie Sitar received the "Excellence in Teaching Award" and Ann MacCuspie, the "Distinguished Service Award."

APSEA STAFF TRAINING

A new cohort of students for Masters in Education for teachers of students who are blind or visually impaired began their two-year, part-time program with two, half unit courses presented at the APSEA Centre during three weeks in July. Nine students are enrolled in this program with two employed by APSEA and another three given APSEA Trust Fund Grants to support their program over the next two years. In return, these teachers signed an agreement to work for APSEA for two years following their graduation. The students began their degree with a course in braille and braille literacy instruction and a course in Orientation and Mobility. During the year, they went on to complete a course in eye conditions and functional implications, developmental psychology of students with visual impairment and blindness, and research literacy. The latter were presented online by Mount Saint Vincent University using WEB-CT. In July 2005, the students returned to Halifax to complete two additional course on site - assistive technology for students who are blind or visually impaired and assessment of students with vision loss. APSEA usually provides or recruits instructors for the courses and has a vested interest in recruiting students for the programs as well. With approximately half of the APSEA teachers retiring in the next five years, preparation of new teachers to assume the vacated positions is critical.

Numerous training opportunities were provided for those working for APSEA during this year. In late August, both teaching and residence staff participated in a full-day workshop to renew their CPR and First Aid certification. Other professional development sessions during the week focused on Sign Language and Orientation and Mobility. The APSEA Annual Inservice was scheduled for the first week of November. It included a beginning staff mentorship workshop for all new staff or staff who were in different assignments for the year. Mary Jean Bray and John McConnell organized the venue and the content of the workshop. Participants were provided information about ASPEA programs, resources, and employment issues. All new staff were assigned a mentor for the year and had regular contact with this mentor, setting goals for completion of their first year in their new roles.

There was a substantial array of options for staff to attend during this year's ASPEA Annual Inservice. Orientation and Mobility Training sessions for Consultants, Residence Counsellors, and Teachers were held early in the week. The main full-day presentation was given by Carol Farenkopf of GTA Toronto Vision Services and addressed the *"Promotion of Literacy for Students with Low Vision."* Other sessions were given by Stephanie Allen-Holt of Fredericton on *"Autism,"* Sheila Jamieson and Andrew McCara (APSEA) on *"Assistive Technology for Literacy and Communication,"* Nova Herring (ASPEA) on "*What's New in Technology for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired,"* and Patsy Newman (ASPEA) on *"Cortical Visual Impairment, Assessment and Programming."* As usual, Grand Rounds at the IWK on Thursday morning with Orthoptist, Eric Haughn, was well received. Mr. Haughn and an Ophthalmology resident presented on *"Visual Fields and Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP)"*. This was an excellent session and always a favourite among the teachers. The inservice was well received, and staff also took the opportunity to network with peers and attend to other committee business such as the Assessment/Career Planning Committee and the Canadian Vision Teacher's Conference Planning Committee. Staff were also informed of the undertaking of an APSEA Review by Superintendent, Debbie Pottie; and later, Mary-Lou Donnelly, Nova Scotia Teachers Union President, spoke on the same issue.

Steve Trussoni, .5 Music Teacher at the Centre and .5 Itinerant Teacher in the HRM, was one of three APSEA staff sponsored by the NSTU/APSEA local to attend the AER International Conference during the summer of 2004. While there, Steve became one of a number of individuals selected by Touch Graphics, Inc. to receive the Talking Tactile Tablet and Authoring Tool (T3) to pilot. Participants were chosen based on their entries submitted outlining potential uses for this new technology which can be used to support individuals who are audio-tactile learners. The T3 is basically a simple computer peripheral device that consists of a touch screen and a device for holding the tactile overlays. Tactile sheets, or overlays, are embossed with raised images, lines and textures that describe images, maps and diagrams. When various symbols, icons, and regions on the tactile surface are pressed, audio information on what the user is feeling comes from a connected computer. For example, when a map is presented as an overlay and parts of the diagram are pressed, the user hears the names of the countries, rivers and borders touched. By using the tactile menu option, vast amounts of relevant data such as demography, language samples, history, statistics etc., can be accessed through a hierarchical menu system. This piece of technology holds great promise as a supportive learning tool for students.
APSEA had a number of representatives attend the CNIB hosted Braille Conference in Toronto. Two of the itinerant teachers attending are APSEA representatives on the newly formed Unified English Braille Code Committee planning a Canadian implementation process for this new code. Dr. John McConnell, who is on several committees of the Canadian Braille Authority (CBA) was funded by the CBA to attend to present several workshops on the tactile graphics guidelines and standards being developed by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) and the CBA. He also gave a workshop on braille immersion ideas for teachers.

Of course, the Canadian Vision Teachers Conference hosted by APSEA provided professional development both in the most current issues in our field and in the planning and presenting of a significant event. Approximately twenty-four APSEA staff were involved in presentations of

one form or another; and about seventy percent of staff were involved in some aspect of the planning or presentation.

APSEA Sponsored Workshops

Throughout the year, APSEA staff regularly present workshops and inservices as part of their routine job assignments. Itinerant teachers often present to parents, school district staff and community agencies on all aspects of the development and education of children and youth who are blind or visually impaired. Many staff members are asked to present at provincial, national and international conferences. The following workshops were provided by APSEA staff during 2004-2005:

Workshop Topic	Location	Number of Participants
ASPEA Services	Teleconference with SET-BC staff	10
Tactile Graphics	Toronto	67
Services for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired	University of Prince Edward Island	31
Services for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired	St. Francis Xavier University	64
Services for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired	Mount St. Vincent University	123
Cost of Blindness	IWK Hospital, Halifax	6
Braille Immersion	CNIB, Toronto	24
Developing Preschool Services for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired	W. Ross MacDonald School, Brantford, Ontario	48
Educational Needs of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired	University of New Brunswick	47
Assistive Technology for Literacy and Communication	Halifax, Nova Scotia	56
Cortical Visual Impairment	Halifax, Nova Scotia	44

Workshop Topic	Location	Number of Participants
Cortical Visual Impairment	Sydney, Nova Scotia	22
Use of the Bookport	Fredericton, New Brunswick	17
The Employment Journey	Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island	21
Use of Intellikeys/Intellitools	Sussex, New Brunswick	7
Use of Intellikeys/Intellitools	Halifax, Nova Scotia	9
Orientation and Mobility	Sussex, New Brunswick	6
Orientation and Mobility	Saint John, New Brunswick	6
Presentations at the CVTC - 24 APSEA Staff presented on various topics	Halifax, Nova Scotia	225
Meeting the Needs of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired in the Regular Classroom	Sydney, Port Hastings, Antigonish, Truro, Oxford, Kentville, Yarmouth, Moncton, Miramichi, Saint John, Woodstock, Perth Andover, Campobello Island, Bathurst, Charlottetown, Tignish, Summerside, St. John's	5 to 20 teachers at each location

Volunteer Services

Once again this year, Danny Johnson's Annual Type-a-thon raised significant funds (over $10,000) for use by children who are blind or visually impaired. The type-a-thon was held at the APSEA Centre in the Board Room. Students and staff visited Danny throughout the day as he continued on his goal to type the numbers from one to one million. A special visitor during the day was Peter Stoffer, Federal NDP member for Sackville-Eastern Shore.

The APSEA Auxiliary continued to respond to requests for students served by APSEA (e.g., funds for new glasses, funding special programs, materials and equipment for the Centre) throughout the year. They held their Fall Fair and Bridge Social, two of their main fundraisers, at the APSEA Centre. One of Auxiliary's ongoing projects is to provide funding for the Toy Library where teachers can borrow an array of toys and instructional materials. This resource is cost effective for APSEA and truly appreciated by the itinerant teachers as it provides them with exposure to a vast array of educational toys and ideas which can be incorporated in student programming. In honour of their thirty year anniversary, the APSEA Auxiliary presented two $500 bursaries (one for a student who is blind or visually impaired and one for a student who is

deaf or hard of hearing) for graduating students pursuing post-secondary education. The bursaries were in memory of APSEA Auxiliary members who have died. Annually, the Auxiliary funds the Dan Harmer Award valued at $100 for a student who has excelled in the use of technology.

APSEA Trust Funds for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

The following Trust Funds were awarded to students who are blind and visually impaired during the 2004-2005 school year:

Award	Amount	Number Awarded
Sir Frederick Fraser - Grade 12	$500	8
Sir Frederick Fraser - Grade 9-11	$100	5
Sir Frederick Fraser - Grade 6-8	$75	5
Sir Frederick Fraser - Grade Primary - 5	$50	5
Lowell Legge - Grades 9 - 12	$100	4
Lowell Legge - Grades 6 - 8	$75	5
Lowell Legge - Grades Primary - 5	$50	4
Mary Rhind - Grades 9 - 12	$100	3
Mary Rhind - Grades 6 - 8	$75	6
Mary Rhind - Grades Primary - 5	$50	5
Mary Bertha Campbell - Grades 9 - 12	$100	2
Mary Bertha Campbell - Grades 6 - 8	$75	4
Mary Bertha Campbell - Grades Primary - 5	$50	-
E. Chesley Allen - Grades 6 - 8	$75	1
E. Chesley Allen - Grades Primary - 5	$50	1
Ronnie Corbett - ($250 total) - $125 (Senior High)	$125	-
Ronnie Corbett - $75 (Junior High)	$75	1
Ronnie Corbett - $50 (Elementary School)	$50	1

Award	Amount	Number Awarded
APSEA Scholarship - $500	$500	-
Exemplary Performance Work Placement (Additional Disabilities)	$250	1
Exemplary Performance Communication/Social Skills (Additional Disabilities)	$100	1
Independent Living Skills (Additional Disabilities) Grades 9 - 12	$100	-
Independent Living Skills (Additional Disabilities) Grades 6 - 8	$75	1
Independent Living Skills (Additional Disabilities) Grades Primary to 5	$100	-
Motor Development and Communication Skills (Additional Disabilities) Grades 9 - 12	$100	5
Motor Development and Communication Skills (Additional Disabilities) Grades 6 - 8	$75	4
Motor Development and Communication Skills (Additional Disabilities) Primary - 5	$50	3
Prevocational Training Award (Additional Disabilities) Grades 9 - 12	$100	2
Prevocational Training Award (Additional Disabilities) Grades 6 - 8	$75	-
Art Award - Students aged 12 - 15	$75	-
Technology Award - Grades 9 - 12	$100	5
Technology Award - Grades 6 - 8	$75	5
Technology Award - Grades Primary - 5	$50	3
Sports Award - Grades 9 - 12	$100	5
Sports Award - Grades 6 - 8	$75	-

Award	Amount	Number Awarded
Sports Award - Grades Primary - 5	$50	2
Keyboarding Award - Grades 9 - 12	$100	2
Keyboarding Award -Grades 6 - 8	$75	2
Keyboarding Award - Grades Primary - 5	$50	2
Independent Living Skills - Grades 9 - 12	$100	2
Independent Living Skills - Grades 6 - 8	$75	3
Independent Living Skills - Grades Primary - 5	$50	2
Special Accomplishment Award	$100	7

ASSESSMENT

AND

RESOURCE SERVICES

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

There were a number of new challenges for me in my role as director during the 2004/2005 school year. APSEA had accepted the responsibility of hosting the Canadian Vision Teachers Conference (CVTC), a major professional development opportunity for those in the vision field. As visual impairment and blindness are low incidence handicaps, the educational issues in this field are seldom addressed by larger special education conferences. The CVTC conference is intended to occur every two years but had not occurred for several years because no organization had stepped forward to host it. APSEA last hosted the conference in 1999. I accepted the role of co-chair of the program committee with Dr. John McConnell, the APSEA Provincial Supervisor for Students who are blind or visually impaired in New Brunswick. The theme of the conference was, "Delivering the Expanded Core Curriculum." There were over 60 presentations covering all nine areas of the expanded core curriculum for students who are blind or visually impaired. APSEA was honoured to have Dr. Phil Hatlen, regarded as the "father" of the expanded core curriculum as a keynote speaker. The conference was filled to capacity with just over 200 participants. The feedback sheets from participants indicated that the conference was a huge success.

In addition to my role with the CVTC, I participated as a committee head to address the implementation of the Unified English Braille Code (UEB). The UEB, as the title suggests, incorporates the three codes currently in use, the literary braille code, the Nemeth code (for Mathematics) and the computer braille code into a single braille code. The UEB had been in various stages of development of 12 years. The Canadian Braille Association (CBA) felt that the code was ready for implementation and in the summer of 2004, established committees to move the process forward. A steering committee and four implementation committees were established. The committees are for Education, Post-secondary education, Braille Production and Braille readers. I agreed to be chairperson for the production committee, which included representation from the Canadian Association of Educational Resource Centres (CAER), CNIB representatives, braille production companies and independent braille contractors. The implementation of the UEB is an extremely contentious issue from the point of view of the provincial resource centres. The factors that have to be considered include staff training, the development of new translation software for braille production, the conversion of many current braille texts into UEB, and the provision of braille in both the UEB and the traditional codes during the implementation period. In addition, assistive technology provided to braille students would have to be modified or replaced. The implementation issue became very divisive for CAER. The annual CAER meeting, hosted by APSEA in Halifax, failed to establish a stand on the implementation, choosing instead to sponsor a literature review on the existing research into the viability of the UEB.

In addition to the above, a review of the delivery of APSEA services to the four Atlantic Provinces was authorized by the APSEA Board of Directors. The APSEA Directors and the Directors of Students Services for each of the four Departments of Education form a committee

which will examine all major facets of APSEA service in conjunction with established provincial committees and report to the APSEA Board of Directors.

Respectfully Submitted,
Richard Thompson
Director

ASSESSMENT SERVICES

Assessment is an essential support service that APSEA provides for the public school system to assist in meeting the needs of students who are blind or visually impaired (BVI), deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) or deafblind. While the responsibility for meeting the educational needs of these students resides with their district school, it is acknowledged that these students have special needs which are beyond the expertise of many public school teachers. The intent of APSEA assessment services is to work collaboratively with school district personnel and parents to identify appropriate program goals and procedures to maximize the educational success of children and youth who have sensory impairments. Although APSEA assessments include an assessment of the level of the sensory impairments, the purpose of the assessments is the identification of programming directions. The students assessed by the APSEA assessment teams have already qualified for APSEA services and are receiving support from an APSEA teacher within the public school system.

The process of referring a student for an APSEA assessment begins at the public school level for school age students and in the home with the support of the receiving school for preschool students. The APSEA teacher assigned to the student collaborates with the parents and a public school team to determine when a referral for an APSEA assessment is appropriate. Once it has been determined that an assessment is required, a referral form must be completed and forwarded to the appropriate APSEA Supervisor of Provincial Services. The APSEA Supervisor of Provincial Services reviews the referral and determines an assessment priority. This is crucial as the number of referrals for assessment generally exceeds the number of assessments that can be completed in any given year. As well, the assessment teams strive to provide an equitable number of assessments for each province participating.

APSEA has two assessment teams based at the APSEA Centre in Halifax. One team provides assessments for students who are blind or visually impaired while the other provides services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The assessment team for students who are blind or visually impaired provides assessments for students from each of the four Atlantic provinces. The assessment team for students who are deaf or hard of hearing assesses students from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

Each assessment team is headed by a Coordinator of Assessments whose job it is to schedule the assessments from the referrals received, oversee the collection of all relevant information, coordinate non-APSEA involvement in the assessment and ensure that the staff and procedures are in place to meet the stated goals of the assessment. Each team is comprised of a psychologist and assessors with established expertise in the education of students with sensory impairments. As well, each team has access to the services of a Speech Language Pathologist and a Physiotherapist.

The assessment teams strive to individualize the assessments, but there are common types of assessments. Typically, the first assessment that a student receives is a preschool assessment. As the name implies, the students are assessed prior to school entry or early on in their school experience to identify the support and programs required to ensure success. Assessments are also commonly requested at transition times, when the students are moving from elementary

school to middle school or junior high or from junior high to high school. As well, career planning assessments are provided for students who require support in the transition from public school to work or to post-secondary education. Another common reason for an assessment referral is an unexplained change in the child's performance at school. Assessments may be tailored to provide program suggestions for students who have educational needs in addition to their sensory impairments.

The majority of assessments are provided at the APSEA Centre over a three-day period with accommodation for the students and their parents provided at the APSEA Centre. Career planning assessments may require additional assessment time. All assessments are followed by a case conference with parent and school participation. An extensive written report follows within three weeks. In addition to providing assessments at the APSEA Centre, assessment staff provide consultation and inservice as directed through the APSEA Supervisors for Provincial Services.

The core DHH assessment team consisted of four staff members during the 2004/2005 school year. These were the Coordinator of Assessments, an Academic/Language Evaluator, an Educational Audiologist and a Psychologist. The team was augmented by a Speech Language Pathologist, a Physiotherapist and a Consultant for deaf students with additional disabilities when required.

The assessment team for DHH completed 48 of 53 assessments scheduled for the academic year 2004/05. There were 27 assessments scheduled for Nova Scotia students and 28 were completed. This is because some cancelled New Brunswick assessments had to be filled with students from the Nova Scotia waiting list. There were 19 students from New Brunswick assessed from 25 who were scheduled for assessment. One student from Prince Edward Island was referred and assessed.

The core BVI assessment team consisted of four full-time staff members and two part-time staff members during the 2004/2005 school year. The full-time staff included the Coordinator of Assessments, a Teacher of the Visually Impaired, a Psychologist and a Speech Language Pathologist. The team was supplemented by a part time Physiotherapist position. The BVI assessment team accesses teaching staff from the APSEA Centre for most assessments. The areas assessed by APSEA teachers may include physical education, music, orientation and mobility, active learning (for students with additional disabilities) and independent living skills.

There were 49 assessments scheduled by the assessment team for BVI in the academic year 2004/05 and 47 assessments completed. Thirty students from Nova Scotia were referred and assessed. New Brunswick school districts had 14 referrals with two cancellations for a total of 12 students assessed. There were five referrals from Prince Edward Island and all five were assessed. No students from Newfoundland were referred for assessment.

The assessment teams were supplemented by a full-time Career Planning/Work Skills assessor who provides assessments for both populations. This assessor works in collaboration with both assessment teams and with the APSEA Transition Coordinators to direct the students toward appropriate career and work experiences. During the 2004/2005 school year, career planning

assessments were provided for 13 students who are blind or visually impaired and for seven students who were deaf or hard of hearing from a total of 22 scheduled assessments. These students were included in the assessment statistics provided earlier. The career planning assessor also provided support for two career camps for students who are blind or visually impaired and one career camp for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

RESOURCE SERVICES

Resource Services are those services provided from the APSEA Centre to support programs, students and staff in public school settings. APSEA offers a broad range of resource services which are outlined in detail in this report. Stated in general terms, APSEA provides the services required for students with sensory impairments to participate fully in their educational settings.

Alternate Format Production

A crucial support for students who are blind or visually impaired is the provision of educational materials, text books, teacher made materials, etc. in an accessible format. Educational materials required in Braille or e-text and unavailable through interlibrary loan are produced in the APSEA Braille production unit. During the 2004/2005 school year, the Braille production unit consisted of a supervisor, six full time Braille Transcriber positions and one and a half Tactile Illustrator positions. Proofreading of the Braille and e-text was shared among the transcribers and supervisor. However, there were disruptions to braille production as three of the six Braille Transcribers took leaves of absence during the year. As it was not possible to recruit experienced braillists to fill these positions, creative solutions were required in order to maintain production levels. The half time Tactile Illustrator was asked to return to full time and assist in the brailling. As well, a retired braille proofreader was asked to return on a part time basis to free the braillists from some of the proofreading duties. Finally, two term positions were added and given primary responsibility for e-text production, freeing the experienced braillists from those duties.

The Braille production unit uses state of the art technology to produce Braille text and raised line representations of diagrams. As well, the Braille unit produces and maintains a collection of "twin vision" books which contain Braille and print to facilitate the process of parents reading with their blind child. The Braille unit produced 14 134 pages of Braille in a total of 248 volumes for the 2004/2005 school year. As well, the Braille unit continued a project to produce early literacy materials in twin vision. Twin vision books are produced by embossing the text in Braille on a clear plastic sheet which is inserted in the print book. Additional tactile information is added to the books in an attempt to provide the student who is blind with some of the information that is presented pictorially in the book. As well, some twin vision books have a "story bag" with them in which objects representing key story concepts are included. The process of producing twin vision books is quite labour intensive as each copy of each title must be produced by hand. The twin vision books are assembled in sets which are then lent to students to support early literacy initiatives in each of the Atlantic Provinces.

The Braille unit is also responsible for e-text production. During the 2003/2004 school year, e-text production was expanded so that any student requesting e-text could receive it unless the text requested was already available in an accessible format. This was an intermediary step to ensure that the Braille department was able to meet production demands. For the 2004/2005 school year, all restrictions on e-text production were dropped and students were provided with materials in the format that was requested for them. This is in keeping with the "Canadian National Standards for the Education of Children or Youth who are Blind or Visually Impaired, Including Those with Additional Disabilities."

Although e-text can be provided by simply scanning a document, the production of e-text of consistent quality that can be accessed easily by students with a range of abilities is an involved process that is similar to Braille production. The production of e-text at APSEA must also meet interlibrary loan standards and follow all copyright requirements. However, the production demands of e-text are more than balanced by the potential benefits to students who are blind or visually impaired. The portability and flexibility of e-text gives students options that they have never had before. As well, e-text is almost exclusively the format of choice for post-secondary students with print disabilities, for the reasons above as well as the fact that it is often the only way that they can access print material in a timely manner. Approximately 3 600 pages of e-text were produced during the 2004/2005 school year. This number is expected to increase each year as teachers and students become more familiar with it and as it becomes easier to access through developments in assistive technology. In the latter part of the school year, a file transfer protocol (FTP) site was established as a secure and effective means of providing students and teachers with materials on e-text. The e-text is loaded onto the site by the supervisor of the braille department and teachers and students are notified. Either the itinerant teacher or the student may then retrieve the materials as required. In addition to the text books requested by teachers, titles for independent recreational reading are added to the site. Students may read the e-text on a BookPort (piloted in 2004/2005), laptop computer, braille computer or MP3 player.

Educational materials required in large print and unavailable elsewhere were produced through an agreement with the Government of Nova Scotia print shop. Price increases at the government print shop led to increased costs for large print production. The books are scanned and printed at the print shop and sent to APSEA for binding. In some cases, the scanned files are requested by APSEA for conversion into e-text or braille.

Educational materials required in an audio format and unavailable elsewhere are produced in either analog or digital format by volunteer readers. APSEA continued to participate in the CNIB led Canadian DAISY Consortium during the 2004/2005 school year but did not produce any books in the DAISY format. However, a project was begun with the assistance of a DAISY software developer who offered to assist APSEA in becoming efficient producers of DAISY e-text and audio in return for an opportunity to test his DAISY software. Two portable recording units were developed so that volunteer readers could record DAISY materials in their homes rather than being required to record in the APSEA sound booth. This option will allow APSEA to access a greater number of volunteers and increase its capacity to produce books in a digital audio format. It is expected that production of DAISY audio and e-text will begin in the fall of 2005.

In the meantime, the library has more than 500 titles in DAISY format available for loan. Students who receive materials in this format are provided with software programs that enable them to read the materials on their laptop computers or are provided with a BookPort, which, after a successful pilot project, is being made available to any student who requires it.

Canadian Association of Educational Resource Centres (CAER)

Each region of Canada has a resource centre that provides alternate format materials to blind and visually impaired students (and in some cases to print disabled students). Together these centres form a loose network of alternate format producers called the Canadian Association of Educational Resource Centres for the Provision of Alternate format materials (CAER). The primary function of CAER is to share resources and approaches between resource centres to ensure that the needs of students who are blind or visually impaired are met efficiently. To this end, the CAER members list their holdings of alternate format materials on the AMICUS database administered by Library and Archives Canada and access them through an interlibrary loan process. During the 2004/2005 school year, APSEA borrowed 267 titles from other resource centres and lent 144 titles (some of these titles were lent or borrowed in multiple copies). APSEA also accessed 14 titles from the CNIB at a cost of $50 per loan or $100 for the purchase of a master copy. The fact that the CNIB charges for loans and alternate format production is one of the primary reasons why they do not qualify for membership in CAER.

Interlibrary loans save the APSEA Centre approximately $150 000 and collectively save the CAER group over $4 000 000 in annual production costs while avoiding needless duplication of resources. CAER has also lobbied for copyright exemptions for alternate format producers. While the resource centres have little clout individually, CAER has been successful in the past in making federal government institutions aware of the needs of students and youths with print disabilities.

An example of this is a pilot project currently under way for the development of an electronic clearing house for alternate format production. The project involves several CAER resource centres, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and the Canadian Publishers' Council. The purpose of the pilot project is to develop a procedure whereby producers of alternate format materials may be provided with titles on accessible publishers disks for transcription into alternate formats. The potential gains for resource centres and their clients are great but first the publishers must be convinced that their rights are adequately protected through the process. A successful pilot project should lead to an expansion in participation by Canadian publishers.

APSEA was the host centre for the annual CAER meeting in May 2005. This was primarily because the Canadian Vision Teachers Conference and the annual meeting of the Canadian Braille Association were also being held in Halifax in May. This allowed CAER members to participate in all three activities with minimal travel if they so desired. The implementation of the Unified English Braille code (UEB) once again dominated the discussions. The majority of CAER representatives remained unconvinced that the benefits of implementing the UEB outweighed the costs of switching from current braille production and some members were

vehemently opposed to the UEB. Implementation of the UEB would mean additional costs for staff training, changes to production technology, reproduction of some current braille materials in UEB and replacement of student assistive technology. The CAER representatives decided to hire a university student to complete a study on current research into UEB implementation. The results will be discussed at the 2006 CAER meeting in Toronto.

The CAER representatives also began a pilot project for the sharing of resources in digital format. An FTP site established by the Manitoba Department of Education will be used as a vehicle for the resource centres to share digital files. The representatives also agreed to identify technical staff to participate in meeting that will run parallel to the May CAER meeting. The purpose of this meeting will be to upgrade current interlibrary loan protocols to reflect changes in technology and to make recommendations on directions for the future. The group of technologists will also have an opportunity to establish ongoing contacts and develop collaborative procedures for dealing with future technological advances.

Library Services

The process for the provision of alternate format materials begins with a consultation between the APSEA itinerant teacher and the classroom teacher. Together they identify the materials that the student requires in an alternate format. They also determine the format required, i.e., Braille, large print, audio or e-text. The list of required materials is then forwarded to the APSEA library.

All the resource services offered by APSEA are coordinated through the library services unit. All requests for technology, books, kits and other materials to support students who are blind or visually impaired are processed by the library staff. If the title requested is in the APSEA collection, the item is packaged and sent by courier to the APSEA teacher who requested it. If the item is not currently available at APSEA, a database search is conducted to determine if the item is available from other CAER resource centres. If available, the item will be borrowed from a resource centre through the interlibrary loan agreement and made available to the student. When the item is unavailable through interlibrary loan, the APSEA library staff take the request to a Production Committee meeting where a determination is made on whether to produce or purchase the item. The purchase or production of an item is facilitated by the library staff. Once an item has been purchased or produced, it is catalogued by library staff, entered on the APSEA database and the AMICUS (shared) database and loaned to the teacher who requested it.

The library staff consists of two full-time and one part-time library technicians. The full-time staff each represent two of the Atlantic Provinces and process the orders from itinerant teachers in those provinces. The part-time staff member is responsible for cataloguing materials and for processing interlibrary loans.

Each summer the library staff oversees the return of materials both to the APSEA library and the other lending partners. They also process the material requests for over 700 APSEA students who are blind or visually impaired as well as interlibrary loan requests from other resource centres. In late August, there is a major mail out of materials to itinerant teachers.

In addition to responding to requests from APSEA teachers, library staff also collaborate with other APSEA staff to research and pilot innovative materials for blind and visually impaired students. As well, current professional materials are purchased and distributed through the library.

Toy Library and Volunteer Services

A part-time volunteer coordinator oversees the APSEA toy library, coordinates volunteer services and acts as a liaison to the APSEA auxiliary. The APSEA auxiliary is a longstanding service group that organizes fund-raising activities to supplement APSEA services. The major project supported by the auxiliary is the funding and maintenance of the toy library, a resource that provides toys specifically designed to aid in the education and development of students who are blind or visually impaired or deaf or hard of hearing. The toy library operates on the same model as the APSEA library. The main beneficiaries of the toy library services are preschool students and students with additional disabilities who are receiving APSEA services. The auxiliary spends $3000-5000 annually on developmental toys.

The auxiliary also responds to requests from APSEA teachers and annually funds a variety of undertakings to support students and parents. The endowments primarily support needy families who require assistance that is outside the mandate of APSEA and other service providers. One item that has received consistent support is the funding of children to attend summer camps. As well, the auxiliary annually supports an intervenor program which funds trained staff to work on concept development with sensory impaired preschoolers over the summer. The auxiliary has also funded the purchase of glasses and hearing aids when parents were unable to afford them.

APSEA volunteer services maintains an important role in the array of services that APSEA provides but it is a role that has changed dramatically since its inception. Initially, the primary role of APSEA volunteers was to provide a big brother and big sister type of role for students in residence at the APSEA Centre. The elimination of traditional residential services in favor of short-term residential programs has altered that role. Volunteers are still required to provide student support but in smaller numbers and for specific short term goals. The primary role of the volunteers has shifted to providing support for APSEA resource services. The major support is the recording of books on audiotape or digital audio by volunteer readers. Each year APSEA volunteer readers record school textbooks for the APSEA library and ultimately for students who are blind or visually impaired. This is an essential service that saves APSEA thousands of dollars in production costs annually. As well, as e-text production has increased, volunteers have been recruited to proofread e-text so that braille unit staff can be freed up for the production of braille and e-text. All APSEA volunteers must provide a criminal record check, undergo an initial interview and be available for inservice training as required.

During 2004/2005 volunteers recorded audio books and proofread e-text. Others provided program support at the APSEA Centre, participating in career weeks, outings from the residence and recreational activities such as swims, bowling, and coffee houses.

Technology

There are two major roles that are filled by the technologists employed by APSEA; the provision and support of assistive technology for students who are blind or visually impaired and the provision and support of the technology services required by the APSEA organization.

APSEA has a consultant for assistive technology and a technician assigned to support the provision of assistive technology. The consultant is responsible the development and maintenance of procedures and strategies for the effective provision of assistive technology for students who are blind or visually impaired. This includes collaboration with other educational resource centres, manufacturers of assistive technology and the students and teachers who require assistive technology. The technician orders, adapts and repairs the devices. The technician is also required to oversee the lending and returning of the devices by recording the loans on the database and issuing annual inventory lists to the APSEA staff and the itinerant teachers employed by Newfoundland and the New Brunswick Francophone services.
Developments in assistive technology for students who are blind or visually impaired have provided a major step in allowing these students to compete with their sighted peers academically. It is not possible for a student with a significant visual impairment to succeed academically without assistive technology. The type of technology provided is determined by each student's visual and educational needs. For example, most students who are blind and entering school require a Mountbatten brailler. The Mountbatten brailler is a computerized brailler which allows the student to produce hard copy braille for their own use and a print copy for the classroom teacher who is unlikely to know Braille. A QWERTY keyboard may be attached to the Mountbatten brailler to enable the teacher or other students to produce braille notes or messages for the student who is blind. Low vision students entering school may require different types of magnifiers including a closed circuit television (CCTV) which greatly magnifies text material.

As students advance in school, their technological needs keep pace with their educational needs. From the middle elementary grades on, the primary tool provided to students is the laptop computer. Students who are blind may move from the Mountbatten brailler to a computerized braille note taker with refreshable braille display (plastic braille dots on the display are extended and retracted to allow the student to read e-text in braille). As well, they will be provided with a laptop computer with a speech synthesizer, a braille embosser and a printer. In addition, they will likely require a talking dictionary and a talking scientific calculator. Low vision students at this age may require a laptop computer with large print software and a CCTV upgrade. The technology needs of high school students who are blind or visually impaired are complicated, requiring a broad array of technological options. On-line courses and internet-based instruction have added to the technical challenges of providing students who are blind or visually impaired with equivalent access to that of their sighted peers.

The technology staff work with APSEA teaching staff to provide technology that is appropriate to the needs of each individual student while trying to stay within common platforms in order to simplify the technological support. As well, the technology staff review and pilot new technology for the blind and visually impaired in order to keep in step with the latest developments. These efforts are supplemented by liaisons with other resource centres to ensure

mutual benefit and prevent costly duplication of effort. APSEA continued to collaborate with Special Education Technology - British Columbia (SET-BC) during the 2004/2005 school year through participation in a pilot project to introduce the Book Port, an e-text reader designed specifically for students who are blind or visually impaired. The results of the successful project were presented at the Canadian Vision Teachers Conference by the APSEA consultant for assistive technology and her counterpart from SET-BC. Through collaboration, APSEA and SET-BC were able to increase the number of participants in the study and maximize their resources.

The major focus of technology for students who are blind or visually impaired continues to be on the development of access to information. Access to Internet technology will continue to be a challenge for APSEA for the foreseeable future. Developments in mainstream technology have greatly increased the complexity of the graphical information on the Internet over the last few years. Graphics are often indecipherable for students with visual impairments and do not readily lend themselves to translation into alternate formats. A further challenge is the provision of on-line courses in accessible formats. The staff at APSEA is committed to working with technology staff in the departments of education in Atlantic Canada to address the challenges of providing accessible on-line courses.

In addition to the provision of technology to students, the technology staff provide teachers with technology that will aid them in providing support for the students. An example of this is in the provision of Braille production systems for schools which have students who use Braille. This system consists of a computer, printer, scanner, Braille embosser and Braille translation software. Braille production systems have been provided to APSEA teachers who have Braille using students on their caseload for some time. The provision of these systems directly to schools allows students, teachers, and itinerant teachers to produce Braille on site. The systems can also produce print from electronic Braille. The system is intended to provide the student who is blind or visually impaired with simultaneous access to print materials that are provided in the classroom. These materials include teacher handouts, magazine and newspaper articles and items of personal interest to students. For practical reasons as well as copyright restrictions, the system is not intended for the reproduction of text books.

Audiology

The audiology unit consists of an educational audiologist, a full time technician, a half time technician and a secretary. The primary role of the audiologist is to provide support to the assessment team for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. An assessment of a hard of hearing student is dependent on the student having appropriate amplification. The audiologist ensures that the student's hearing potential is maximized. In addition to this, the audiologist provides an assessment that focuses on the hearing performance of the student in an educational setting. This second step is invaluable to the assessment team in establishing program needs and is generally unavailable from public sector audiologists. However, public sector audiologists very effectively provide all audiological services for APSEA students, outside of APSEA assessments. The APSEA Audiology Department works closely with the public sector audiologists to coordinate services and to prevent the unnecessary duplication of services.

Audiological services that are provided through collaboration between APSEA and pubic sector audiologists include the provision of hearing aids to students at the manufacturers price, the processing of hearing aid repairs and the taking of ear mold impressions.

The audiology unit operates as a liaison between hearing aid manufacturers and parents to provide amplification equipment at a significant reduction of the retail cost. Hearing aid prescriptions are forwarded to the APSEA audiology secretary by public sector audiologists. The audiology secretary prepares a purchase order and upon receipt of payment, orders the equipment from the manufacturer. The manufacturer sends the equipment directly to the audiologist who prescribed the hearing aids, for fitting on the student. The savings to the parents of the child who is deaf or hard of hearing may be as much as half of the retail cost of the hearing aids.

The audiology unit also facilitates the repair of hearing aids by the manufacturer. This is an essential service, as private sector audiologists do not provide services for equipment that they have not sold and public sector audiologists are not able to process payments for services. The faulty hearing aid is sent directly to the hearing aid manufacturer by the public sector audiologist for repair. The repaired hearing aid is returned directly to the audiologist after the repairs are completed and is fitted to the student's requirements by the audiologist. APSEA is billed for the repair and, in turn, invoices the parents for the cost of the repairs.

As well, the APSEA audiology department provides a liaison between audiologists and ear mold manufacturers, thus facilitating the efficient provision of ear molds for students. Ear mold impressions are taken by either an audiologist or an itinerant teacher for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. In the case of the itinerant teacher, the APSEA audiologist provides the training in the taking of ear mold impressions and certifies the teachers as qualified to perform the procedure. Only teachers of the deaf with ear mold certification are permitted to take ear mold impressions. APSEA provides materials for the making of the ear molds to both the itinerant teachers and public sector audiologists. As with hearing aid repairs, the ear mold impressions are sent directly to the manufacturer and APSEA is billed. APSEA invoices the parents for the cost of the ear molds.

Another service provided by the APSEA audiology department is the provision and maintenance of FM amplification equipment. Personal hearing aids are not sufficient for students with severe to profound hearing losses to function effectively in a classroom setting. In order for the student to hear the teacher, the sound of the teacher's voice must be louder than the background noise. Since a hearing aid amplifies all the sounds in the classroom, the teacher's voice is frequently lost in the mix. An FM unit captures the teacher's voice in a teacher worn microphone and sends it directly to the student's hearing aid. As FM units are primarily educational tools, they are provided and maintained directly by APSEA. APSEA currently owns approximately 700 FM units. Many of these units are approaching obsolescence. A large number of the older FM units are being replaced by more expensive micro-link units which are much smaller than traditional FM technology and are more likely to be worn effectively by appearance conscious students.

An increasing number of deaf students are receiving cochlear implants. They are supported by the Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech Centre (NSHSC), Cochlear Implant program. APSEA continues to have responsibility for the educational needs of students who have cochlear implants

and therefore remains in close contact with the cochlear implant team at the IWK. As well, APSEA collaborates with the NSHSC on the provision of appropriate FM support for students with cochlear implants. These are students who did not require FM support in the past because they were profoundly deaf and would be assisted by a sign language interpreter.

Student and Family Counsellor

Counselling services were established to support the integration of students who are deaf or hard of hearing or blind or visually impaired. It is recognized that these students, because of the way that their impairment affects social integration, may have unique social and emotional needs. As well, they and their families may have difficulty adjusting to losses of vision or hearing or have unrealistic assumptions about how those losses will impact them in the future. Even emotional issues common to the peers of students who are blind or visually impaired or deaf or hard of hearing, such as those related to adolescence, may be misinterpreted or may have to be addressed in a unique way to accommodate the students' sensory needs.

Counselling services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing are provided through the APSEA provincial programs. There is one Student and Family Counsellor serving students who are blind or visually impaired in the four Atlantic Provinces. The latter position is administered through the Assessment and Resource area. As the counsellor provides support only when the student or family issues are a result of the visual impairment and adjustment to or acceptance of the visual impairment, counselling services through the usual educational and medical support systems are generally not an option.

A further responsibility of the Student and Family Counselor is the provision of short term programs for the development of social skills in collaboration with the APSEA psychologist and centre based teaching staff. While the counsellor often establishes the first contact with the student at the APSEA centre when the student is attending a short term program or assessment, travel to see the student and/or family is an option. The counsellor has established a set of criteria for travel in collaboration with the APSEA directors and provincial supervisors. The primary prerequisite for travel is the perceived ability of the counsellor to address the issues over a short period of time or support the referral of the student to local agencies; the number of referrals is to great to allow one counsellor serving four provinces to have an established caseload.

Assessment and Resource Services Staff List 2004/2005

Director: Richard Thompson

Assessment VI

Jane Brown, Coordinator; Victoria Buchan, Psychologist; Marilyn Neal, Assessor; Cindy Millar, Speech Language Pathologist; Mary Lou O'Connor, Physiotherapist (0.6 fte); Louise MacLeod, Secretary

Assessment DHH

Lisa Norwood Smith, Coordinator; Sue Ley, Academic Language Assessor; Peyton Harris, Psychologist; Reg Dunphy, Audiologist; Rosalie Walters, Secretary

Career Planning Assessor: Jeanette Joseph

Resource Services

Library Technicians: Gail Simms, Peggy McCann, Donna Whitman (0.6 fte.)
Consultant for Assistive Technology: Nova Herring
Technologists: Michael Phelan, Fraser Morrison, Denis Groleau (0.5 fte.)
Volunteer Coordinator: Shelley Meister (0.6 fte.)
Database Coordinator: Trish Cornick (0.6 fte)

Braille Production Unit: Norma MacDonald, Supervisor; Kim Lloyd, Braille Transcriber (maternity leave, February 2005 - February 2006); Deborah Huskins, Braille Transcriber; Dominique Legate, Braille Transcriber; Jeffery Thornhill, Braille Transcriber (personal leave, April 2005 - October 2005); Janet Milbury, Tactile Illustrator; Lynn Cone, Tactile Illustrator (0.6 fte.); Stacey Young, Braille Transcriber (maternity leave, November 2004 - September 2005); Rose LeRiche, Braille Transcriber; Mary Beth Purcell, Braille Transcriber (term position, May 2005 - January 2006); Helen Cone, Braille Transcriber (term position, May 2005 - October 2005).

Audiological Services

Reg Dunphy, Audiologist; Colleen Little, Technician; Denis Groleau, Technician (0.5 fte); Linda VanBuskirk, Secretary

Counseling Services

Bert Thompson